

Thought for the Day

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Thought for the Day No. 01

Think and live the Buddhist way

In developing thoughts of friendliness and loving kindness or *mettā* towards all living things in the world in which we ourselves live, we are well advised in the Buddhist tradition to be guided by the **principle of self-example**. It is called in our Buddhist texts the *attūpanāyika-dhamma-pariyāya*. It is best that we teach our young children this principle in the home, from their very young days, almost from their pre-school childhood.

We would like all parents, irrespective of being Buddhist or non-Buddhist, to take this into their heads very seriously. This would form a wonderful **safeguard against obnoxious peer pressure from the schools** about which you and I in this country are both equally well aware. This self-example principle which we choose to call a very noble socio-religious tradition, comes down from the Lord Buddha,

the Master himself and has its roots in the earliest and the best of our Buddhist texts.

See what the Nālaka Sutta of the Suttanipāta tells us on this. `As I am, so are they. As they are, so am I. Taking oneself as the example, let not one kill, nor get others to kill.'

*Yathā ahaṃ tathā ete yathā ete tathā ahaṃ
attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā na haneyya na ghātaye.*

Sn. v. 705

And the Dhammapada presents it from a yet different angle, but with an equally valid and socially vibrant consideration of which the humans of the believed-to-be saner world should take more serious note. Here it is. `All tremble at being beaten with clubs and rods. All dread at being killed. Taking **oneself as the example**, let not one kill, nor get others to kill.'

*Sabbe tasanti daṇḍassa sabbe bhāyanti maccuno
attānaṃ upamaṃ katvā na haneyya na ghātaye.*

Dhp. v. 129

Please note that the word **daṇḍa** in this context **is not punishment**. It means sticks and clubs with which people attack one another. Please co-operate with us in arresting and getting off the scene such corrosive howlers in Buddhist writings.

In a very popular Buddhist Sutta called the Veṅḍuvāreyyaka in the Samyutta Nikāya [SN. V. 352-6], the Buddha tells the people of Veṅḍuvāra that the best mode of practicing healthy and sound moral living is on the basis of self-example or **attūpanāyika**.

The Buddha elaborates it in this manner. A Buddhist disciple [i.e. **ariyasāvako**] thinks thus: I wish to live. I do not wish to die. I like happiness and comfort. I am averse to unhappiness and discomfort. I being such, it is not proper for me to cause the death of a man who himself wishes to live and who does not

like to die, of a man who likes happiness and comfort and is averse to unhappiness and discomfort.

In this manner, the Buddha goes through the three acts of bodily violence like killing, stealing and sexual offenses and the four offenses of speech like lying, tale-telling, harsh words and frivolous speech. These are pin-pointed as patterns of antisocial behaviour which, on this basis of self-example, must not be resorted to by the instructed and educated Buddhist disciple. Thus we discover that ***mettā bhāvanā*** or development of loving kindness in Buddhist religious living is the development of one's attitude of friendliness or non-hostility to all living things around us.

This attitude development of non-injury applies both to injury to oneself and injury to others besides oneself, i.e. *atta-vyābādhāya* and *para-vyābādhāya*. In the Ambalaṭṭhikā Rāhulovāda Sutta. The net result of this Buddhist culture is that one never has within oneself a sense of hostility and antagonism towards others: *yo vyāpādo so pahīyissati*. It is not mere wishing or prayer for the sake of welfare of others. Check on what you are doing at the moment as practice of ***mettā bhāvanā***, guided or unguided. Check on your own growth within.

In this manner, correction of human behaviour in society is primarily based on this principle of **self-example** or ***attūpanāyika***. Do not do unto others what you would not like others to do unto you. What an ennobling injunction which is more than twenty five centuries old in the history of religions in the world. What a lovely brotherhood, true and sincere, of humans, of men, women and children that would make.



Thought for the Day No. 2

Forbearance and Patience - Kamā

*Yo have balavā santo dubbalassa titikkhati
taṃ āhu paramaṃ khantiṃ niccaṃ khamati dubbalo.*

Even while possessing physical power, whosoever forbears towards a weaker person, that is called the highest expression of patience.

A weakling has necessarily to hold back all the time.

Our theme today is forbearance and patience. In Pali we express this idea with the words *khanti* and *kamā*. This is the restraint of **impulsive reaction** in the **face of provocation**. When others address us with words which are not pleasant and polite or make remarks at us which are critical and harsh, it hurts us because it does violence to the personal image we have created of ourselves.

Ours is a highly perfected image. It is at the same time a self-projected one. We have decided for ourselves how things should be. And we expect from the world outside complete conformity to it. We have built it according to our own plans and our own wishes. There are also within it, no doubt, standards and norms of propriety and decency set up by the world. When these are violated, it is our ego that is primarily wounded.

When we are angered and possibly driven into a rage because of **harsh and bad words of others**, we should remind ourselves of two things. Mark my words here about the area about which I am now speaking. It is still at **the level of speech or words**. Not of provocative physical action, like a blow dealt on you. First, we must remember that we cannot appoint ourselves the **law enforcement authority** over **the improprieties of others**. We can do no more than give a gentle hint to the other about the apparent error or offer a mild reminder. Acceptance or rejection of it is entirely with the other party. We cannot insist on **legal authority for ourselves for prosecution and punishment**.

This provocative region in the use of speech is the area the correction of which Buddhism takes over with its carefully spelt out principles regarding propriety of speech. As Buddhists, we are apparently concerned, if at all, only with the fourth precept of lying or *musāvādā veramaṇī* of the *pañcasīla*. Remember, Buddhism has a great deal more than that. Think, for instance of slander or tale-telling which goes under the name of *pisunā vācā*. Offenses through faulty speech in Buddhism are fourfold - *vācā-kammaṃ catubbidhaṃ*. There are regulatory precepts for the prevention of each - such as *musāvādā veramaṇī*, *pisunā-vācā veramaṇī*, *pharusā-vācā veramaṇī* and *sampappalāpā veramaṇī*.

In the well known Sutta called the Parable of the Saw or Kakacūpama of the Majjhima Nikāya [MN. I. 122-129. Sutta No. 22], the Buddha details out five different ways

in which **people can properly engage themselves in conversation**. People must pay attention not only to the truth or falsehood of what they say, but also to many other considerations like propriety of time, one's intention or motivation behind an act of conversation, etc. These will naturally reduce the provocative situations in which people at the receiving end of improper speech will lose their patience and resort to unguarded impulsive reactions. Buddhist counseling attempts to reduce the viciousness of such situations with a two-pronged approach. First, by reducing the amount of such unguarded speech in society. Second, by regulating the reactions of people to such situations.

These instructions will equally well apply to provocative situations resulting from impropriety of bodily action like killing, stealing and sexual misbehaviour. From the angle of the doer, these are guarded against under the *sīlas*, particularly the *pañca-sīla*. From the angle of the persons at the receiving end, they are advised, in terms of the dhamma, not to develop bitterness and wrath over such deeds done. The evil resulting from generating such reactions is said to be unsuspectingly massive. They build up ceaseless chains of reactions, contributing to the misery of saṃsāric continuance. With patience and

forbearance, we must always resist reacting impulsively to provocative situations.

Brooding over injuries done to one by others, through word or deed, builds up unsuspected masses of wrath and enmity which directly flow to the production of misery for us all the time. This is the vibrant theme of the following verse from the Dhammapada.

*Akkocchi maṃ avadhi maṃ ajini maṃ ahāsi me
ye taṃ upanayhanti veraṃ tesaṃ na sammati.*

Dhp. v. 3

He abused me, he assaulted me, he defeated me,
he took away my possessions. Whoever keeps brooding
in this manner, their anger never ceases.

May all beings be well and happy. May there be peace on earth and good will among
men.



Thought for the Day No. 3

Rewards of Good and Evil

*Na hi dhammo adhammo ca ubho samavipākino
adhammo nirayaṃ neti dhammo pāpeti suggatiṃ.*

Good and evil yield not the same results. Evil leads to a
state of degradation. Good leads to a state of elevation.

Today we speak about **differentiating between good and evil**. The verse we quoted above defines good and evil in terms of the results or ***vipāka*** they produce. Evil or ***adhamma*** leads to the degradation of the human while ***dhamma*** or goodness upgrades his life. In terms of life in the world, basic goodness of

man depends on his total adjustment to the world he lives in, with the minimum damage to or destruction of what is within it. Life in the world, even according to the latest findings of the top class scientists, has to be one of perfect adjustment to what is known as the ecosystems of the world. This is how the great scientists of the world express this idea.

"The one process now going on that will take millions of years to correct is **the loss of genetic and species diversity by the destruction of natural habitats**. This is the folly our descendants are least likely to forgive us."

Edward Wilson in Biophilia Hypothesis p. 4

Life of every living thing has to be respected. This includes all forms of life, both human and non-human. Any injury to it, at any point, to serve the whims and fancies of man, **quite often under the misleading cover of divine sanctions in religious teachings and practices**, invariably leads to ecological imbalances. Thinking on these lines of non-violence is now the order of the day, world over. But today, governments everywhere are so stupefied and politicians turned so much to self-seeking that they can hardly get anywhere near to these lines of sensible thinking.

This is why the first precept of Buddhist *pañcasīla* emphatically begins with the respect for all forms of life. *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī* is not the mere non-killing of a fowl for the table - for your lunch or your dinner. All over the world, respect for life is taking a new turn, reflecting a recognition of and respect for everything that lives on this planet. Such people not only shun and keep away from animal foods, e.g. fish, meat and eggs, but even do not utilize anything which in its preparation causes injury to animal life. Even pharmaceutical products which are tested on animals are totally rejected by certain groups of people.

In a country where teaching and learning of Buddhism has been completely veered in the direction of an academic exercise, whether in the schools or in the temples or in the Pirivenas, for the award and receipt of certificates or degrees, the content of Buddhism gets seriously abridged. And at the same time

lamentably distorted. For instance, not to know that the current practice of **observing the Poya day Uposatha or Aṭa Sil for a limited period of time** from morning only till the evening of the same day is, I tell you, **a complete perversion**. Who knows about it or who is honest and brave enough to tell others about it?

In a Buddhist country like Sri Lanka, we must be able to reflect a far greater degree of love towards all forms of life. Let us join the saner and more humanitarian world of today by cutting down the consumption of animal foods. The world-wide campaign in this direction is overwhelming. Any stubborn attempt to resist it is to express our greed to eat in support of our Epicurean philosophy of eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow we die. But let us not die with an animal philosophy of the jungle of merely eating and drinking. At least a little more than that. Let us make an honest endeavour.

May all beings be well and happy. Let there be peace on earth and good will among men.



Thought for the Day No. 4

Payment for the Evil we do

An evil deed done does not immediately bear fruit like milk set to curdle. Like a spark of fire concealed under a pile of ash, it keeps chasing the doer, consuming him in its flames.

Dhp. v. 71

Our theme today is penalties or payments for the evil we do. This is the Buddhist theory of *kamma* and *vipāka*. Remember, as we shall soon show you, *kamma* in Buddhism does not imply fatalistic determinism. Nor is it a theory of 'a tooth for a tooth and an eye for an eye.' Looking out for identical resemblance of the results to the deed previously done is pointed out by the Buddha himself to

be a mistaken and distorted vision of the Buddhist theory of *kamma*.

In the Anguttara Nikāya [AN.I. 249], the Buddha corrects the fallacy when people say " In whatever manner a man does a deed, in the same manner he shall suffer for it." - *Yathā yathā ' yaṃ puriso kammaṃ karoti tathā tathā taṃ paṭisaṃvediyati*. The point of the Buddha's correction here is that the doer does not suffer in a pattern identical to the *kamma* committed, but he suffers the fruition thereof - *yathāvedaniyaṃ kammaṃ karoti tathā tathā' ssa vipākaṃ paṭisaṃvediyati*. The idea of a *kamma* and its identity with the *vipāka* or *kamma-sarikkhatā* is hereby ruled out. Many monks and many more laymen write books and deliver sermons, obviously through ignorance of the dhamma, supporting this erroneous view.

But the idea that a doer of bad *kamma* must purge himself of their toxic effect of self contamination is a basic idea of the Buddhist *kamma* theory. That no man shall gain his liberation without paying off for or purging oneself of the ill effects of the consciously committed bad *kamma* is a fundamental principle of Buddhist teachings - *Na tvev ' āham bhikkave sañcetanikānaṃ kammānaṃ katānaṃ upacitānaṃ appaṭisaṃvidivā dukkhass' antakiriyaṃ vadāmi*. AN.V.292

What then is bad *kamma*? Buddha himself defines *kamma*, stressing primarily its psychological basis. "I say the motive is *kamma*" says the Buddha - *cetanā ' haṃ bhikkhave kammaṃ vadāmi*. If these motives for action have mind-defiling bases like greed or *lobha*, hatred or *dosa* and delusion or *moha*, then the resulting action is said to be classified as *akusala* or unskilled. Such action produce painful results or *dukkha-vipāka*. They tend to lead one to degraded states of existence. They deflect one from the goal of Nirvana.

This fruition process of *kamma* or of *kamma* bearing its fruit spreads extensively through time. *Kamma* may immediately bear fruit here and now and then it is labeled as *diṭṭha-dhamma-vedanīya*. It may see its fruition in the very next existence - *upapajja-vedanīya*. Or it may be at any time during one's *samsāric* continuance - *aparāpariya-vedanīya*.

Thus it becomes clear that **kamma** rooted in the evil bases of **lobha**, **dosa** and **moha** contribute to the prolongation of the painful life process in **samsāra**. And for that same reason, the Noble Eightfold Path which leads man out of it is called the **kamma-nirodha-gamanī-paṭipadā** [*Katamo ca bhikkhave kamma-nirodha-gāmanī-paṭipadā. Ayam eva ariyo attharigiko maggo. SN.IV. 133*]

So it is important that we Buddhists become adequately aware of what prompts us to a wide range of maddening activity in life and choose sensibly as to what we could safely do and what we could not do, without disastrous consequences to ourselves.



Thoughts for the Day No. 5

Good day, dear listeners. Today as I wind up this current series of Buddhist Thoughts for the Day with which we commenced the second year of the third millennium, let me finally present to you a prescription for a new psychology of religion with which we could re-formulate a new philosophy of living in this multi-ethnic, multi-religious land, with no attempt at endorsing heaven enforced divisions. The time is most opportune for it today, with many new things in our hands to reckon with.

I extract for you today a brilliant idea, an idea which is equally vibrant, from one of my favourite handbooks, namely the Dhammapada. It is verse No. 24. It has one of the loveliest combinations of psycho-physical considerations for dignified decent living in the world for the achievement of maximum successful living. The Pali word used here to denote this achievement is **yasobhivaḍḍhati** which means 'enhances the glory'. Trace it in the Dhammapada and study it carefully. Here it is -

*Uṭṭhānavato satimato sucikammasa nisammakārino
saṃyatassa ca dhammajīvino appamattassa yasobhivaḍḍhati*

Dhp. v.24

The virtue of **Uṭṭhānavato** in our lives requires maximum physical alertness in all areas of activity. But it goes without saying that it has to be constantly backed and supported by an inner strength of the mind. It is a word of very great significance in the area of Buddhist psycho-ethical application. It stands opposite to concepts like **pamāda** which imply heedlessness, neglect and delay. In verse No.168 the Dhammapada uses it very vibrantly in the statement **Uṭṭiṭṭhe nappamajjeyya**. Be alert in action and waste not a single moment. **Uṭṭiṭṭhe** here we take as a verbal form, meaning **rise up** or **be on your alert**. In a Commentarial distortion it is taken as a noun, meaning **on one's alms round**. I firmly say we disagree. The Ālavaka Sutta says that **uṭṭhāna** is the best stimulant in the acquisition of wealth - **Uṭṭhātā vindate dhanam**. It is also the bed rock of ethical development in Buddhism. It is with **uṭṭhāna**, coupled with **appamāda** or diligence, closely associating psycho-ethical virtues like restraint and discipline [**saṃyama** and **dama**] that one acquires for one's own security a firm footing from which no devastating flood can carry one away.

*Uṭṭhānenappamādena saṃyamena damena ca
dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī yaṃ ogho nābhikīrati.*

Dhp. v.25

Next to **uṭṭhāna**, as an invariable associate for successful living is **sati** i.e. mindfulness or mental alertness as in **satimato** in the verse we quoted above. Remember this is a requirement in our day to day living, without much of religious halo around it. We need to possess large doses of it for our safety and security. It certainly can be made to form a stable pedestal for our own spiritual build up. But please don't make the mistake, as most people often do, of identifying this basic **sati** with the more specialised higher grade **sammā sati** of the Eightfold Path.

Religiously approved purity in conduct which is lived within an accepted

perimetre is yet another requirement for wholesome and successful living. That is what is implied by the two words *sucikamma* and *dhammajīvi*. Being attentive and careful [*nisamma-kāṇ*] and being ever restrained and guarded [*saṃyata*] are virtues which are expected of humans, both young and old, of whatever the sex they be, men or women. Virtues do not make exceptions to any age or gender differences. Virtue and goodness are for all mankind as a whole.



Thoughts for the Day No. 6

Maximum Success in Life

Good day, dear listeners. Today let me present to you a prescription for a new psychology of religion with which we could re-formulate a new philosophy of living in this multi-ethnic, multi-religious land of Sri Lanka, with no attempt at conforming to or endorsing any heaven enforced ethnic or religious divisions. This does not require many long drawn sermons to convince persons with any down to earth sanity in their heads that these divisions cannot be upheld anywhere except with brutal violence. The time is most opportune for it today, with many new problems in our hands.

I extract this for you from one of my favourite handbooks, namely the Dhammapada. It is verse No. 24. It has one of the loveliest combinations of psycho-ethical considerations for dignified and decent living in the world for the achievement of maximum success in living. The Pali word used here to denote this is *yaso'bhivaḍḍhati* which means enhances one's glory. Trace it in the Dhammapada and study it carefully. Here it is -

*Uṭṭhānavato satimato sucikammaṣṣa nisammakāriṇo
saṃyatassa ca dhammajīvino appamattassa yaso'bhivaḍḍhati*

Uṭṭhānavato in our lives requires maximum physical alertness in all areas of activity. But it goes without saying that it has to be constantly backed and supported by an inner strength of the mind. It is a word of very great significance in the area of Buddhist psycho-ethical application. How much preaching on our part would it require to give you even a faint indication of its relatively stupendous power over your infantile *pūjās* and supplications or *bāra-hāra* at road side shrines. It stands opposite to concepts like *pamāda* which imply heedlessness, neglect and superstition. In verse No.168 the Dhammapada uses it very vibrantly in the statement **Uṭṭiṭṭhe nappamajjeyya**. Be alert in action and waste not a single moment. **Uṭṭiṭṭhe** here we take as a verbal form, meaning **rise up** or **be on your alert**. In a Commentarial distortion it is taken as a noun, meaning **on one's alms round**. I firmly say we disagree. The Ālavaka Sutta says that **uṭṭhāna** is the best stimulant in the acquisition of wealth - **Uṭṭhātā vindate dhanam**. It is also the bed rock of ethical development in Buddhism. It is with **uṭṭhāna**, coupled with **appamāda** or diligence, closely associating psycho-ethical virtues like restraint and discipline [**saṃyama** and **dama**] that one acquires for one's own security a firm footing from which no devastating flood can carry one away.

*Uṭṭhānenappamādena saṃyamena damena ca
dīpaṃ kayirātha medhāvī yaṃ ogho nābhikīraṭi.*

Dhp. v. 25

Next to **uṭṭhāna**, as an invariable associate for successful living is **sati** i.e. mindfulness or mental alertness as in **satimato** in the verse we quoted above. Remember this is a requirement in our day to day living, without much of religious halo around it. We need to possess large doses of it for our safety and security. It certainly can be made to form a stable pedestal for our own spiritual build up. But please don't make the mistake, as most people often do, of identifying this basic **sati** with the more specialized higher grade **sammā sati** of the Eightfold Path.

Religiously approved purity in conduct which is lived within an accepted perimeter is yet another requirement for wholesome and successful living. That is what is implied by the two words *sucikamma* and *dhammajīvi*. Being attentive and careful [*nisamma-kāṇī*] and being ever restrained and guarded [*saṃyata*] are virtues which are expected of humans, both young and old, of whatever the sex they be, men or women. Virtues do not make exceptions to any age or gender differences. Virtue and goodness are for all humankind as a whole.



Thought for the Day No. 10

Training and Growing Up in One's Own Religious Culture

Buddhists of any creed, anywhere in the world, if they claim a unity and identity with the original teachings of the historical Buddha Śākya-muni Gotama, must necessarily imbibe the culture of his early original teachings. It is a culture which imparts a vigorous and wholesome program of growth and development to the human anywhere on this planet, without it being delivered in its origin to any set of selected or chosen people. Hence its universality of appeal, without any discrimination in terms of ethnicity or regional identity. It was delivered here, down on earth, by an enlightened human for the guidance and deliverance of less enlightened humans, without any command to obey and without any threats of punishment.

In the absence of any foreign aid for the salvation of man, from any saviour among men or from any region beyond the realm of man, serving like a discriminating World Bank, the Buddha insisted that salvation of man was in his own hands. It is personal self-development by each individual, for himself or herself, that ferries humans across to their individual liberation in Nirvana, without any implications of time or place.

This immediately implies the grooming of man, i.e. our men and women on earth for the task. Humans are reckoned as being well above animals on account of their power to judge [*manassa ussannatāya manussā* at VvA. 18 & KhpA. 123] as against animals who act merely on reflexes. This grooming is the most vital component in Buddhism as a religion [or a scheme of personal, and not collective salvation, if you prefer to call it that way]. It goes under basic name of culture or *bhāvanā* i.e. culture of the body and culture of the mind [*kāya-bhāvanā* and *citta-bhāvanā*]. If the English word **meditation** does imply what it is meant to do, it does cover only a very limited narrow segment of the tremendously large concept of *bhāvanā* in Buddhism.

With the physical and mental alertness of which I spoke to you yesterday already implanted in you, let me take up the second half of the verse No. 168 from the Dhammapada. What the verse gives is *dhammaṃ sucaritaṃ care*. I have already translated it as **live the good life righteously well**. My stress, I place in two places - **righteously well** and **good life**. This is the way the Buddhist religion expects its followers to live. The word **dhamma** in this context means **the pattern of life** according to which the Buddhists must live. It is not what is merely in the printed books, whether in Sinhala or in English.

You need to get the Dhamma into your very living process. It is the very spirit of life. It is what gives your word and deed its very distinctive stamp. What you speak and how you speak, what you do and how you do, how you act and how you react, they all have to be determined by Dhamma. Every Buddhist, with a head above his shoulders, needs to know that he needs to acquire a distinct Buddhist way of living, not by accidentally being born into so-called Buddhist families, but by being guided and directed by parents who begot them and who themselves know what their Buddhistness means.

There has to be a specific Buddhist way of behaviour, a way of doing things. All our words and deeds have to have a specific Buddhist foundation. It is that alone that generates the Buddhistness in each one of us and prepare us for the attainment of the goal we aspire to get to. It should now be clear to you that what

we call *sīla* is set up to regulate our behaviour pattern in terms of words and deeds. Now the phrase *dhammaṃ sucaṛitaṃ care* which we quoted above and which we translated as **live the good life righteously well** covers this territory of *sīla*. This means that we should not use our hands and feet to cause injury and harm to others, man or animal. They all have a right to live. This is what we precisely call a fundamental right. Some at world level narrowly call it a **human right**. But the Buddhists have to think that it is a right of every living thing - the right to live and safeguard its life. We are glad that an unbelievably large segment of the world are now moving in this direction, and write books on subjects like **Animal Liberation, Save the Animals, Beyond Beef**, and so on.

These authors are by no means Buddhist. But they accord so well with Buddhist thinking. They do not believe that animals were created by some graciously generous person to be eaten up by humans. So in the new year that has just dawned, **2003**, why not we, the cultured Sri Lankans show the pioneering animal lovers of the world who have done this for decades that we also can show our genuine love towards the animals by not eating their bodies at least on a single day in the week. Why not go vegetarian on that basis. It will definitely do you do good on more than one count. That will generate a vibrant pattern of good life of love and care that accords well and truly with the dhamma.

In the regular Buddhist code of *pañca sīla* which every good man and woman must observe for the sake of peace on earth and goodwill among men, there are a few more items which contribute to good living among the humans. We must honestly learn to respect the ownership of legitimately acquired property of others, whether that be of private individuals or of the state. For what belongs to the State is the collective property of the people. Can we ever learn to think like that? This, well and truly, is the beginning of living the good life righteously well.



Thought for the Day No. 15

Where Buddhist Religiousness begins with the Dawn of the Day

Wake up for the day. Waste not a moment. Do you know that now you have much less time to spend than you did some years ago. It is others who draw up the schedule for you. You need to fit into it with an awareness of your own, Do not forget this point that many things have to be necessarily completed today before you go to bed.

As you start the day, begin with yourself. Before you leave home, think of the many things you will have to do. Establish your self identity. As a Buddhist you must promise yourself every morning to continue being a Buddhist throughout that day. Pledge aloud your loyalty to the Buddha saying those words of adoration **Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa**. Say it thrice and loud enough to be heard throughout the house. Even your cat and the dog, I would say, need to know that you are a Buddhist. We have seen and known homes, both here and abroad, where even these animals reflect this awareness. And that, through sheer regular training they have received. Why not you and your children? Make no secret about doing this. Be ashamed of it if you do not have the courage to do it. This act of adoration of the Buddha is the first act of purge with which you must begin your day.

Next to this adoration of the Buddha must come your taking refuge in the *tisaraṇa*, i.e. the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha. Followers of all religions necessarily do this sort of avowal of faith to bind themselves to their creed. Some do it more than once a day, even two or three times. It is this, and this alone, that establishes one's religious identity. One's religious life-style emerges out of this. Being a free thinker as far as one's religious life is concerned, in our opinion, is quite like being the mother of a father-less child. It is no secret today that there are unmarried Sri Lankan mothers who are quite proud of being so.

As far as the Buddhists are concerned, their religious identity is further

confirmed, beyond *tisaraṇa*, by pledging to observe and abide by what are known as the five precepts or *pañca-sīla*. As we repeatedly say, over and over again, these are no more and no less than guide lines for the maintenance of healthy inter-personal relationships in the human community, extending this cordiality to the total environment, including animals and plants.

Further to this daily grooming, if your parents live with you at the moment, direct your thoughts of love and respect immediately towards them, accompanied with thoughts of appreciation. It is they who begot you, and forget not that it is they who reared you and cared for you to bring you up to where you are today. These thoughts of grateful appreciation do not demand much time. But this does charge your battery of life with reliable energy to last you more than one full day. Your parents do reciprocate their love and blessings to you. We know you hardly appreciate this. If you have any doubts about it, we do need to re-wire your whole setup to avoid a disaster of short circuit.

For a satisfactory pursuit of a Buddhist policy like this, there must indeed be in the land a satisfactory governance of the state. Buddhism has indeed clearly laid down the way to govern so that there may be peace on earth and good-will among men, without any prayers to heavens above. The oft-quoted *Rājā bhavatu dhammiko* never comes to be accomplished through your prayer or the chanting by the monks. Take the prayer back to the people in the village and the town. It is they alone, here down on earth, and not the super powers above who, like the village black-smith, can beat it back to prescribed shape, of being a righteous good ruler - *dhammiko ddammarājā*.



Thought for the Day No. 16

Enough of these Global Brutal Killings Anywhere and Everywhere

Good day, dear listeners. We are now in the last month of the fifth year of the third millennium, in the month of December, 2005. As the day dawns this morning, we could see the fifth year of the millennium miserably dragging its slow length along. Governments come and go, with their powerful and less powerful leaders. In the whole world, and I would observe it here in Sri Lanka in particular, the year has been worse than a wounded rat-snake. The world over, it has been pitiable and lamentable. Human vengeance has been ruthlessly thrust upon humans, its intensity being relative to the military strength of world power blocks, unified through wild acts of strange alliance, stretching across globally. Murder and death, destruction and disaster, has been piling heavily upon one another in many parts of the world. Fury of religions has been shamelessly and nakedly made visible. The stupidity and villainy of religious conversions, prompting ruthless retaliatory massacres in many parts of the world, is yet to be assessed and understood. Have these brought about any noteworthy changes in the pattern of this uncultured arrogant human thinking? Take adequate note of it. And now for our thought for the day, as presented via Buddhism.

"Arise. Arise, I say. Waste not a moment in your life. Live the good life well and truly: *Dhammaṃ sucaritaṃ care*. It indeed bestows upon you, here and now, as well as hereafter, ample happiness and comfort which you long for." This message is a great deal more than you imagine. It undeniably benefits you in your entire life process, in more lives than one. What about its benevolent overflow? Crack up your over-hardened shell within which you have been jealously hatched for centuries, with messages from different parts of the globe. This precious bit of thinking which we now offer is enshrined for you in the Dhammapada as follows.

*Uttitthe nappamajjeyya dhammaṃ sucaritaṃ care
dhammacārī sukhaṃ seti asmiṃ loke paramhi ca.*

Did this Buddhist injunction strike you with this same emphasis ever before? Did it come to you at all from a monk or layman, or from any bit of *dhamma* in print or at the latest, from the internet in the electronic media? In many a place, we have discovered its translation to be totally incorrect. Please note. You are free to come back to us, if you like, at 2689388.

This, we believe, is what every religion should meaningfully sponsor in the world today so that the good religious life of man lived here on earth brings about peace and harmony among humans, without any discrimination in terms of religion, ethnicity or political hostility. It should not remain merely a prayer on one's lips. Do world religions, in their teachings or worldwide activities exemplify this today? `Far from it', has to be the invariable reply, without any hesitation. Humans should not be fooled into fighting and destroying fellow humans in whose midst we are born to live in order to glorify the territories of the divine, in whom we are indoctrinated to believe in, as superceding and presiding over us.

As one of the finest examples of this good life in Buddhism, please remember, we can start with the Sermon of the Bamboo Gate or the Veludvāreyyaka Sutta [Samyutta Nikaya Vol. V. 352 ff.]. We witness the residents of the area calling upon the Buddha to admonish them as to how, in expectation of a blissful life, they should live a good life - *sama-cariyā*, i.e. a balanced harmonious life which is in contrast to *visama-cariyā* or a wildly lived rugged life.

The Buddha's norm for this is what is popularly known in Buddhism as the **self-example** or *attūpanāyika*. The basic ethic underlying this `Do not do unto others what you would not like others do unto you.' It is with us Buddhists, more than two and a half millennia old. We must not fail here to remember that this message of the Buddha was delivered to the world more than twenty-five centuries ago. And mark those words above **in expectation of a blissful life**. Let this be a basic foundation of our religious aspirations.

Embodied within this is the basic idea of LOVE in Buddhism or *maitrī* in action. This is the very rock-bottom of ethics in Buddhism. It is the primary concept of friendliness or *mitta-bhāva*, i.e. absence of hostility. It is also the basis on which alone that human rights at world level can be nurtured. The concept of Buddhist *pañcasīla* also revolves on this. It is for this reason that any breach of the *pañcasīla* is said to generate a sense of **hostility in individuals** [*pañca-verāṇi*] and simultaneously **a sense of dread** [*pañca-bhayāṇi*] **in society**. Let everyone of us, of every religious denomination, try to restore to our society healthy and wholesome inter-personal relationships via the teachings of the *pañcasīla*.



Thought for the Day No. 17

Respect for All Life as the Basis of Human Culture

Good day, dear listeners. In my talks so far I have indicated to you what I consider should be the essential growth pattern of Buddhist culture in our daily life. Our endeavor as Buddhists is to make better men and women out of our humans in our midst. This undeniably includes the children too in our midst. We cannot miss them. Child is the father of man, they say. This culture turns out to be in the ultimate analysis to be primarily one of inter personal relationships. Buddhism being basically anthropocentric, i.e. depending entirely on the role of every single human individual, and no divine personalities, one or many. It could not be otherwise. Literally we do not hitch our wagon to a star, i. e. to any form of a single divinity or divinities outside ourselves.

Personal human culture in Buddhism begins with each one's respect for the life of every other. This necessarily includes both human and animal. Correction of our ethical behaviour is on the basis of self-example, *attūpanāyika*, you remember. Those who love their lives, who wish to live and shudder at the idea of being killed, should always create and picture in their own minds this situation

when thoughts of destruction of life of others come to them. These others are always those who are not in alignment with you. The English language has a whole lot of self-incriminating arrogant words like infidels, pagans, heathens etc. Communists, as against Democrats also stand in these self same condemned compartments.

We Buddhists have to think that there can be no killing for a purpose or for a cause. It is an extremely selfish stupid idea behind which every one who destroys life shields himself or herself. This is what leads, every day and everywhere, to genocide, whether it is the bomb on Hiroshima or the more recent air raid massacres on Iraq. Large scale destruction of human life in battle fields through gun fire and equally well through land mines, suicide bombs etc. These come from factories of political leadership, call it nationalist fanaticism or right of self-determination, on any ethnic or religious grounds. These are Don Quixotic adventures on saving others whom you wish to believe are much less developed than you.

To use a slang, these are cock-eyed views of power seeking individuals or groups who do not mind sacrificing disproportionately large communities for individual gain and glory. These acts are not very different from gang robberies. We Sri Lankans need to awaken to these. The time has come for action. It is not a day too early. We Sri Lankans have inherited a sanity to see clearly through these. For whatever reason, if you have been a supporter of this kind of fanciful theories, press down your clutch deep and immediately change your gear. Mind you, you are on a murderous self-destructive run. We wish somebody could invent an automatic gear within man, like a pace-maker for a mal-functioning heart. Or like an air bag in a modern automobile.

There is yet another area of self-gratification which is vicious when viewed with adequate detachment and compassion. **Mark my words adequate detachment and compassion.** We often fail to stand up to this. It relates to the area of food we eat. Why do we eat food? Let us face these questions with human kindness. Humans, remember, are not the only ones who have to live on

this planet. We are only a segment, only a part of a vast set up called the ecosystem. Any imbalance we cause to this, can deprive us of our right to live here.

Like tenants living in an apartment, paying a rent and agreeing to the terms of the lease, we can also be totally wiped out of this planet for the villainy we do. We multiply the animal life on this planet like poultry, cattle and aquatic life **by various artificial means**, fatten them like filling rubber balloons with gas, and devour them heedlessly and gluttonously with no upper limit set. This process of indiscriminate destruction of life has been proved to have many ill effects which are a threat to the continuance of humans on this planet. Please treat all forms of life with far greater respect.



Thought for the Day No. 18

Guard against the Road-Blocks which you set up on your Path to Nirvana

Good day, dear listeners. By now it should be clear to most of you as to what my line of approach is with regard to building up social solidarity via the teachings of the Buddha. The road to Nirvana is, as I always maintain, laid through a clean and healthy society. Society of humans in which we live is like the diving board in a swimming pool from which one takes a leap in the direction of Nirvana. Do not run away from it.

Society is no more than a body of people, of men, women and children of all ages. The diversity of its composition, particularly in Sri Lanka, is too well known to us. Qualitatively it is heterogeneous and therefore its aspirations have to be very naturally manifold. And we are quite used to this too. We have very peacefully accommodated this situation for centuries. We can give proof of this.

Political leaders play jugglery with this all the time. But that is how in this country Sripada or Adam's Peak and Kataragama have come to be places of multi-religious worship.

Nevertheless, on the way to Nirvana, humans must begin with a basic degree of personal cleanliness. And admittedly this cleanliness has to be brought about by the humans themselves. For in Buddhism, we have neither grace from outside which is to be sought through prayer nor other cleansing media like holy water, sacrificial offerings or religious fires which purge us of our sins and qualify us for our liberation. Worldlings have a naturally acquired coating of dust and dirt on them which alienate them from their spiritual liberation.

This is a psycho-ethical consideration. Contemporary Indian religions of the Buddha's day like Jainism called them by various names like *kilesa*, *āsava* and *rajas* or personality polluting media. This, the humans acquire through a faulty exposure to the world and their incorrect reaction to it. Basically it lies in our misdirected or unguarded gratification of our senses. Western psychologists have now begun to see the danger of this very harmless looking natural process.

Resulting from this enlightened new vision, they now put forward as a safeguard against this, an acceptably excellent idea in **delay gratification**. Here let me remind the Buddhists that this is an integral part of their spiritual culture. The elementary culture of abstinence from or *veramaṇī* of the Buddhist *sīla*, specially of the *uposatha* on the full moon day, is calculated to promote this. What percentage of Sri Lankan Buddhists, let me ask, know this or how many ever go through this in their own life? Are they ever being told that this is invariably a part of their religious culture which they should be practicing with diligence and unflinching regularity?

There are many things in the world which attract, I would say assail, our sense organs like the eye, the ear, the tongue etc. The values which we have set upon them, through our own personal associations and our competitive behaviour of urban life set a very high premium on them. Foods at Macdonalds

or the Pizza Huts give untold joy to the metropolitan children who have been to them. Even the older ones, we are quite certain, are not any less attracted. But in giving into these temptations, or seductions we would plainly say, how conscious are we of the consequence they bring in their wake? If the responses to these are carefully watched, guarded and restricted, well and good.

But in most homes, the father, the mother, the children and even the grandma, one or all of them, hasten and compete with each other to respond to these attractive invitations brought home through our senses and to gratify them. Beware and be mindful of the consequences.



Thought for the Day No.19

Moral Goodness and Ethical Escalation Sure Steps on the Road to Nirvana

As Buddhists, we shall begin by defining Nirvana as the journey's end. 'Who wishes to embark on this journey, on a journey to go from where to where' would be a very pertinent question. We discover ourselves on a lonely highway, with a faint awareness that we have already journeyed on this road an infinite number of kilometers. But as to what we have passed on the way, we hardly have any memory of them. And as for the road ahead of us, it is anybody's guess, often completely off the mark.

Buddhists should look upon their present situation in life to be not very different to what we have described above. One could hardly call oneself a Buddhist if one has no clear idea as to what *Samsāra* is, its qualitative reckoning and as to what is the best way out of its dangers and perils. If you have not been adequately tutored on this via reliable and authentic dhamma information, i.e. what our texts refer to as *parato ghoso*, you have then not got a corrected vision

or *sammā dit̥ṭhi* about your own creed. And mind you, *sammā dit̥ṭhi* is your first step in your upward stairway to release in Nirvana, namely the Noble Eightfold Path. That is why our Buddhist texts refer to our religious culture leading to Nirvana as being heralded by *sammā-dit̥ṭhi*. They describe this as *sammā-dit̥ṭhi pubbaṅgamā*.

According to what we understand from our authentic Buddhist texts, the Eightfold Path is comparable to a stairway of eight steps, leading upwards gradually from *sammā-dit̥ṭhi* at ground level to *sammā samādhi* as stage No. 8 eight. Beyond and outside this path, lies stage No. 9 which provides the necessary wisdom or *ñāṇa* as the product of the Path lived so far. It is tis wisdom, referred to as *ñāṇa* or *paññā* which liberates the worldly being from *Sam̐sāra*: *sammā samādhissa sammā ñāṇaṃ pahoti*. The subsequent stage No. 10 is the final release or *vimutti*, produced through *ñāṇa*. The texts are very clear on this when they say *sammā ñāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti*. This is our aspired goal of Nirvana.

This interpretation of the Path as a gradual process, we believe, accords well with the recurrent Canonical statement that the way of Buddhist religious culture is one of gradual disciplining or *anupubba sikkhā* or gradual activity or *anupubba kiriyā* or gradual pathway or *anupubba paṭipadā*. It also accords very well with the oft-repeated Canonical statement that each preceding state of the Path gives rise to the following, e.g. *sammā dit̥ṭhissa sammā saṅkappo pahoti* etc. Nevertheless, some are known to explain the Path as an eight-ply cable. Let them say what they say. You should reliably acquire, we say, enough dhamma to learn to choose without danger.

On this Path, after your being guided through corrected vision and corrected patterns of thinking, i.e. *sammā dit̥ṭhi* and *sammā saṅkappa*, you cannot miss being led through *sammā vācā sammā kammano sammā ājīvo*. These three items which are 3, 4 and 5 on the Path are meant to put the Buddhist through the preliminary ground-training in basic moral goodness of man to man relationship, without any threat of command or punishment from any external source from

somewhere besides the world we live in. Make no mistake. It is to adequately cover this area of moral goodness and ethical upgrading that Buddhist religious culture begins with this grounding in *sīla*.



Thought for the Day No. 20

March Forward ye Buddhists from Pansil to Aṭa-sil How? When? and Where?

Dear Listeners. Today, sometime before the commencement of the New Year 2006, I wish to speak to you on a subject connected with Buddhism which in Sri Lanka has been derailed for more than half a century. This, of course, is my estimate. The derailment I refer to is with regard to the observance of Aṭa-sil or the eight precepts on the day of the *Uposatha*, i.e. the Pohoya day, which now in Sri Lanka has been reduced, out of the original four, to one single day of the month. Of this too, with the tragic connivance of both monks and laymen of the land, the observance has been murderously mutilated to a half-day event, even less than from sun rise to sun set. You are extremely lucky if you can get it from 6.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m. After the so-called crazy fictitious *pavāraṇā*, any time after 4.00 p.m., you could dump in the temple garbage bin the *aṭa-sil* you so piously took upon yourself in the morning.

Let me tell you that the original pre-Buddhist concept of *uposatha* in India primarily implied the abandoning of one's night meal, i.e. the dinner on that day. The word *uposatha* immediately implies this fasting. This basically indicates in religious circles an essential virtue of austerity, self-discipline and frugality. To the Indians, this act of fasting brought about the necessary dignity in the presence of their gods whom they wanted to venerate. Religion must reflect a decent sense of dignity and decorum, all along. It has to be much more than

buying sausages in a super market.

To Buddhists of the Theravada tradition all over the world, the difference between regular and constant keeping of *pansil* or *pañca-sīla*, and the observance of *aṭṭa-sīl* on special occasions like the *uposatha*, we presume, is abundantly clear. The main difference in choosing to observe the *uposatha* from time to time, is to reduce and curtail the pursuit of sensory enjoyment from which the lay community are not barred, under normal circumstances. These pertain to the unrestricted consumption of food at any time, enjoyment of sex pleasures [of course within limits of propriety of decent society], and ceaselessly satisfying the bodily comforts like the use of extra-comfortable beds and seats, and bodily ornamentation with make-up material, perfumes etc. Entertainment via the eye and the ear like music and theatrical performances also come within the range of sensory gratification, quite like food and sex.

This self-opted *uposatha* thus necessarily implies a reduction in the pleasure-enjoyment-circuit of an average man or woman of the world. Everyone who chooses to observe the *uposatha*, we feel, cannot be blind-folded from the fact that one is doing it out of one's choice, and that as a responsible decently honest person, for a very definite purpose. There is hardly any room for self-deception, with or without the blessings of any clergy.

In contrast to this, stand the regulatory injunctions of the *pañca-sīla* or the five precepts. In our opinion, their range of discipline and their ethical and moral correction is undeniably global. They have to sweep over democracies as well as socialist and communist countries, unmindful of the claims they make about themselves. This is what our semi-legendary Cakkavatti King undertakes to spread over all countries which come under his suzerainty.

It is only as late as the second half of the twentieth century that the so-called developed, as against the undeveloped or under-developed countries of the world, the United Nations awakened to what they visualized as Human Rights. These rights today are lamentably giving leverage to petty tribal and clan wars all

over the world.

On the other hand, the *pañca-sīla* aims at correcting the inter-personal relations of the human kind, any where and everywhere, extending security of life and comfort, even to non-human life of bird and beast. Buddhist texts use but one single phrase, covering the entire range: *sukhino vā khemino hontu sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā* at Sn. v. 145. In this single verse, *sabbe sattā* covers the entire range of life, in this entire ecosystem, very much beyond a flat earth here. This is the territory which the very first precept of *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī* covers.

Sukhino vā khemino hontu cover both comfort and security of every living thing, sweeping over democracies and equally well over communist and socialist regimes, respectively. It is the impact of this kind of benevolent Buddhist thinking which made Emperor Asoka of India command the reduction of use of meat in the royal kitchen and also make kings of Sri Lanka, after the introduction of Buddhism into the island, impose the ban on killing of animals through their policy of *mā ghāta* or No Slaughter in the land.



Thought for the Day No. 21

Over to higher rungs of Ethical Exaltation via Observance of Aṭṭa-sil or Uposatha

Dear Listeners. I have repeatedly explained to you what *sīla* means in Buddhism. It is primarily and basically man's grounding in moral goodness. It is a vital need for the survival and peaceful continuance of man on earth. Moral means man's mutually acceptable good behaviour towards man. That this pertains both to men and women, goes without saying. Indeed, moral goodness according to Buddhism, must embrace the contents of the entire ecosystem

within which we humans are also contained. That is why in developing *mettā* or loving kindness we always speak in terms of *sattā* or living beings, without restricting it to humans, without niggardly limitations of ethnicity and religion. There is no priority whatsoever in directing it first to our kith and kin.

But world opinion today, both in terms of religion, ethnicity and political ideologies aims and plans at annihilating any and everybody else who is not within one's narrowly enclosed group. Decades of world history have shown us that all major wars in the world have been fought on this basis. In our Buddhist thinking, we look upon moral goodness as an inescapable priority without which humans are deemed to descend to the level of animals in their behaviour. Whether it is hand to hand fighting in the battle fronts with rifles and bayonets, or air raids of the Nazis or the Allies in the World War II, or the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, it has been bestial genocide every where. Winning sides annually lay wreaths over the graves of their dead and pray for the repose of the souls of the dead who brought home victory, while those who have lost keep swearing vengeance on their enemy and keep looking out for a possible retaliatory attack.

This wave of aggressively competitive destructive thinking of man, we are inclined to believe, is the outcome of self-elevation as I and mine. Or put it differently, it is limitless ego-inflation of self-identification of the greatness of an individual, of an ethnic group like a nation or race or of a religious creed or a political ideology. These are what people are capable of annihilating each other for. Check on items at world level like the Nuremberg trial or the more recent war on Iraq to discover the truth of this.

This also is the development which man is capable of bringing about, of everything external to him, without taking command of himself from within. This self-command for correction from within, Buddhism maintains, is the fundamental lot of the man of wisdom: *attānaṃ damayanti paṇḍitā* at Dhammapada vv. 80 & 145. The Buddhist antidote for this is the self-composure brought about through personal down-to-earth moral and ethical grooming. This self-grooming via *sīla*,

Buddhism maintains, has to precede today's fashionable chase after wisdom, via so-called meditation.

I wish to lay this special emphasis on the move from daily *pañca-sīla* to the higher grade of *aṭṭa-sīl* because we see therein a smooth process of development of *nekkhamma* or renunciation which is a vital element on the spiritual path leading to Nirvana. *Aṭṭa-sīl*, in its extra precepts of Nos. 3, 6, 7 and 8 requires a genuine detachment from the normal daily gratifications relating to sex, food and personal grooming and entertainment.

Meditation is sitting down to collected and calm saner thinking. And this unquestionably requires both physical and mental detachment or *viveka*: *vivicc'eva kāmehi vivicca akusalehi dhammehi* at DN.I. 73. It is with this same end in view that the Buddha lays down [at SN.I. 165] that three-tiered ascending culture in the direction of Nirvana called *tisso sikkhā* giving the first place to moral grooming in *sīla*, and only thereafter proceeding via mind-culture of *samādhi* to its final ascent in wisdom or *paññā*. Therefore this ascent from daily *pañ-sīl* to seasonal *aṭṭa-sīl* is an indispensable link in the ascent of the honest Buddhist who keenly pursues the Path to Nirvana.



Thought for the Day 2002 January. No. 1

Good day, dear listeners. We are now in the third millenium. As the day dawns this morning, we see that the first year of the millennium has miserably dragged its slow length along. In the whole world, and I would observe in Sri Lanka in particular, the year has been worse than a wounded rat snake. It has been pitiable and lamentable. Take adequate note of it. And now for our thought for the day in the New Year.

"Arise. Arise, I say. Waste not a moment in your life. Live the good life well and truly. It indeed bestows upon you, here and now, ample happiness and

comfort which you long for." It is a great deal more than you imagine. It undeniably benefits you in your entire life process, in more lives than one. This precious bit of thinking is enshrined for you in the Dhammapada as follows.

*Uttitthe nappamajjeyya dhammaṃ sucaritaṃ care
dhammacārī sukhaṃ seti asmiṃ loke paramhi ca.*

Dhp. v. 168

Did this Buddhist injunction strike you with this same emphasis ever before? Did it come to you at all from a monk or layman, or from any bit of *dhamma* in print or at the latest, from the internet in the electronic media?

This, we believe, is what every religion should meaningfully sponsor in the world today so that the good religious life of man lived here on earth brings about peace and harmony among humans, without any discrimination in terms of religion, ethnicity or political hostility. Do world religions, in their teachings or worldwide activities exemplify this today? Far from it, has to be the invariable reply, without any hesitation. Humans should not be fooled into fighting and destroying fellow humans in whose midst we live in order to glorify the territories of the divine, in whom we are indoctrinated to believe in, as superseding and presiding over us.

As one of the finest examples of this good life in Buddhism, please remember, we can start with the **Sermon of the Bamboo Gate** or the **Veludvāreyyaka Sutta** [Samyutta Nikaya Vol. V. 352 ff.]. We witness the residents of the area calling upon the Buddha to admonish them as to how, in expectation of a blissful life, they should live a good life - *sama-cariyā*, i.e. a balanced harmonious life which is in contrast to *visama-cariyā* or a wildly lived rugged life. The Buddha's norm for this is what is popularly known in Buddhism as the **self-example** or *attūpanāyika*. The basic ethic underlying this is ' **Do not do unto others what you would not like others do unto you.**' We must not fail here to remember that this message of the Buddha was delivered to the world more than twenty-five centuries ago. And mark those words above **in expectation of a**

blissful life. Let this be a basic foundation of our religious aspirations.

Embodying this is the basic idea of **LOVE** in Buddhism or *maitrī* in action. This is the very rock-bottom of ethics in Buddhism. It is the primary concept of friendliness or *mitta-bhāva*, i.e. absence of hostility. It is also the basis on which alone that human rights at world level can be nurtured. The concept of Buddhist *pañcasīla* also revolves on this. It is for this reason that any breach of the *pañcasīla* is said to generate **a sense of hostility in individuals [pañca-verāṇi]** and simultaneously **a sense of dread [pañca-bhayāṇi] in society.** Let everyone of us, of every religious denomination, try to restore to our society healthy and wholesome inter-personal relationships via the teachings of the *pañcasīla*.



Thoughts for the Day 2002 January. No. 3

Good day, dear listeners. By now we know that we humans are gregarious by our very nature. That we are fond of company. We have to adopt and accept community life and live in a spirit of friendship. That is what is also conveyed by the Buddhist concept of *maitrī* or *mettā* to which we have already referred in our very first talk. It is the spirit of friendliness between oneself and the rest of the world. It leads to the development of human goodness.

Humans are not to kill humans for their survival or for the furtherance of their ethnic superiority or the expansion of their religious domains. No one with what one would call human dignity or any sense of decency could submit to or subscribe to such barbaric behaviour. That was the rule in history only with the primitive man in his wandering days of the hunt. There could and should be no invasions with any religious or ethnic groups anywhere in the civilized world. Without such a concept being honestly and deeply ingrained in the human mind, any talk of a global village, whether via democracy or socialism, reduces itself to self-deceptive buffoonery. But that is what is happening around us at world level

today.

In a country like Sri Lanka with a long history of peace and culture, better known to the world outside than to those within the roost here, these values have to be retrieved and re-established among the younger generation of the land. We are confident that these young people are full of promise. These values have to be an integral part of the education for the people of this country, specially to the younger. So we take up a few fundamental basic concepts related to this. We sponsor *metta* or *maitrī*, both of which mean loving kindness, as the first. It is not a mere word to be uttered in prayer. Do not convert it into a mere chant. From the lips, it has to get into one's head and heart. The head will decide its logical validity and argue in favour of it. The heart will render it into a living reality as an emotinal quality and make you feel so and live up to it.

Make this development of *maitrī* real by projecting this feeling into those immediately around you in the home - your family members, your wife or husband, your children and your own aged parents but for whom you would not be here today. You are now with them. You have to be with them. Bring that warmth of true love to every one, without reservations and restrictions. This applies, well and truly, to one's love to the whole world - *mettañ ca sabbalokasmiñ mānasañ bhāvaye aparimāṇaṃ*. This requires a great deal of training to develop. But love developed in this manner undoubtedly produces in society a better brand of men and women. No alienation from one another. No psychopathic cases of men and women of all ages suffering from what is fashionably called depression. It is they who develop *maitrī* in this manner who qualify to finally reach their goal in Nirvana - *Na hi jātu gabbhaseyyaṃ punareti 'ti*.

To this we would immediately add another inseparable virtue which should fetch a very high price in society. It is the quality of being respectful which is labelled in Buddhism as *gāraṇa*. The Maṅgala Sutta which offers us a list of thirtyeight items which contribute to success in one's life has a listing of *gāraṇa*, along with a few others of very similar value - *gāraṇa ca nivāto ca santuṭṭhī ca*

kataññutā. *Gāravo* is respectful attitude towards others, particularly to those who are one's seniors. It is the respectful recognition of the worth of others. Buddhists respectfully recognise even those below one's status, like domestic aids in the home, for the services they render for the benefit of others. That is why the Sigala Sutta includes the *dāsa-kammakarā* or servants under its admonition about *disā-namassana*.



Thoughts for the Day 2002 January. No. 4

Good day, dear listeners. By now it should be clear to most of you as to what my line of approach is with regard to building up social solidarity via the teachings of the Buddha. The road to Nirvana is, as I always maintain, laid through a clean and healthy society. Society of humans in which we live is like the diving board in a swimming pool from which one takes a leap in the direction of Nirvana.

Society is no more than a body of people, of men, women and children of all ages. The diversity of its composition, particularly in Sri Lanka, is too well known to us. Qualitatively it is heterogeneous and therefore its aspirations have to be very naturally manifold. And we are quite used to this too. We have very peacefully accommodated this situation for centuries. We can give proof of this. That is how in this country Sripada or Adam's Peak and Kataragama have come to be places of multi-religious worship.

Nevertheless, on the way to Nirvana, humans must begin with a basic degree of personal cleanliness. And admittedly this cleanliness has to be brought about by the humans themselves. For in Buddhism, we have neither grace from outside which is to be sought through prayer nor other cleansing media like holy water, sacrificial offerings or religious fires which purge us of our sins and qualify us for our liberation. Worldlings have a naturally acquired coating of dust and dirt

on them which alienate them from their spiritual liberation.

This is a psycho-ethical consideration. Contemporary Indian religions like Jainism called them by various names like *kilesa*, *āsava* and *rajas* or personality polluting media. This, the humans acquire through a faulty exposure to the world and their incorrect reaction to it. Basically it lies in our misdirected or unguarded gratification of our senses. Western psychologists have now begun to see the danger of this very harmless looking natural process.

Resulting from this enlightened new vision, they now put forward as a safeguard against this, an acceptably excellent idea in **delay gratification**. Here let me remind the Buddhists that this is an integral part of their spiritual culture. The elementary culture of abstinence from or *veramaṇī* of the Buddhist *sīla*, specially of the uposatha on the full moon day, is calculated to promote this. What percentage of Sri Lankan Buddhist, let me ask, know this or how many ever go through this in their own life? Are they ever being told that this is invariably a part of their religious culture which they should be practicing with unflinching regularity?

There are many things in the world which attract, I would say assail, our sense organs like the eye, the ear, the tongue etc. The values which we have set upon them, through our own personal associations and our competitive behaviour of urban life set a very high premium on them. Food at Macdonalds or the Pizza Hut give untold joy to the metropolitan children who have been to them. Even the older ones, we are quite certain, are not any less attracted. But in giving into these temptations, or seductions we would plainly say, how conscious are we of the consequence they bring in their wake? If the responses to these are carefully watched, guarded and restricted, well and good.

But in most homes, the father, the mother, the children and even the grandma, one or all of them, hasten and compete with each other to respond to these attractive invitations through our senses and to gratify them. Beware and be mindful of the consequences.



Thoughts for the Day 2002 January. No. 5

Good day, dear listeners. In my talks so far I have indicated to you what I consider should be the essential growth pattern of Buddhist culture in our daily life. Our endeavor as Buddhists is to make better men and women out of our humans in our midst. This undeniably includes the children too in our midst. We cant miss them. Child is the father of man, they say. This culture turns out to be in the ultimate analysis to be primarily one of inter personal relationships. Buddhism being basically anthropocentric, i.e. depending entirely on the role of every single human individual, and no divine personalities, it could not be otherwise. Literally we do not hitch our wagon to a star, i. e. to any form of a single divinity or divinities outside ourselves.

Personal human culture in Buddhism begins with each one's respect for the life of every other. This necessarily includes both human and animal. Correction of our ethical behaviour is on the basis of self-example, *attūpanāyika*, you remember. Those who love their lives, who wish to live and shudder at the idea of being killed, should always create in their own minds this situation when thoughts of destruction of life of others come to them.

There can be no killing for a purpose or for a cause. It is an extremely selfish stupid idea behind which every destroyer of life shields himself or herself. This is what leads every day and everywhere to genocide. Large scale destruction of human life in battle fields through gun fire and equally well through land mines, suicide bombs etc. These come from factories of political leadership, call it nationalist fanaticism or right of self-determination, on any ethnic or religious side.

To use a slang, these are cock-eyed views of power seeking individuals who do not mind sacrificing disproportionately large communities for individual gain

and glory. We Sri Lankans need to awaken to these. The time has come for action. It is not a day too early. We Sri Lankans have inherited a sanity to see clearly through these. For whatever reason, if you have been a supporter of this kind of fanciful theories, press down your clutch deep and immediately change your gear. Mind you, you are on a murderous self-destructive run. We wish somebody could invent an automatic gear within man, like a pace-setter. Or like an air bag in a modern automobile.

There is yet another area of self-gratification which is vicious when viewed with adequate detachment and compassion. **Mark my words adequate detachment and compassion.** We often fail to stand up to this. It relates to the area of food we eat. Why do we eat food? Let us face these questions with human kindness. Humans, remember, are not the only ones who have to live on this planet. We are only a segment, only a part of a vast set up called the ecosystem. Any imbalance we cause to this, can deprive us of our right to live here.

Like tenants living in an apartment, paying a rent and agreeing to the terms of the lease, we can also be totally wiped out of this planet for the villainy we do. We multiply the animal life on this planet like poultry, cattle and aquatic life **by various artificial means**, fatten them like filling rubber balloons with gas, and devour them heedlessly and gluttonously with no upper limit set. This process of indiscriminate destruction of life has been proved to have many ill effects which are a threat to the continuance of humans on this planet. Please treat all forms of life with far greater respect.



Thought for the Day 2003 January. No. 1

Greetings to our listeners on this first day of January in the year 2003. We are glad to be ushering in a new year. At the same time we are becoming older

children of the new millennium. Please be mindful of that. As I speak in the voice of my Master I can only begin by saying may you all be well and happy. May there be peace on earth and good will among men. This is our expression of love or *mettā* to every one and everything that lives, man, bird and beast. **And that without a third party that stands between us. *Sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā.***

I begin with a verse from the **Dhammapada** [Dhp. v. 168].

Rise up to action. Waste not even a minute of your time. Live the good life righteously well.

He who leads a good life here and now dwells in comfort both here and hereafter.

The first command of this injunction is to be alert enough to rise up to act in any situation, at any time, to which one is summoned - may be by others or may be by your own self. Are you ready for it? Are you sure of your mental and physical alertness for this task? This is where one needs cultivated and cultured self-discipline. I would very kindly request you, not only as Buddhists, but as humans who inhabit this earth, to make up your mind to get down to the art of self discipline, this day itself. This applies not only to the younger ones whom we call children and think that we should teach them. But also to the older ones who need all the time to learn and be taught and need as well to cultivate their lives so that they may be exemplary to the younger in their ways of living.

Parents must find the time, both as mother and father, to get together with their children, boys and girls of about twelve years or under and conduct games with them which can be used to rapidly develop their physical and mental alertness. We recollect doing this type of thing as children more than seventy eighty years ago in our village homes. Then we had no television sets nor computers which enabled us sit sluggishly in front of them, viewing things which are not good enough even for the elders. This happens in most homes for want of anything more attractive to do. Not even the loving company of parents. We have often had reports of children of this age group not turning up at regular meal

times, say at 8 o' clock in the night, because they are watching TV programs, and that with their dinner plates on their lap.

In the world of entertainment, we ask, is this not headless or heartless programming? The idea of acceptable time slots for human activities, domestic, social, religious or any other, seems to be almost gone off everybody's head, both the young and the old. It may also be equally true that some parents themselves are not that keen on sitting, as a habit, together with children at meal times. But we have Charmaine Sanders of Australia, writing in her **Teenage Stress** in 1992 [page 16], pleading for the restoration of this healthy and wholesome domestic habit of parents for the harmonious growth of family life.

Having taught very artfully your children the habit of being all the time physically and mentally alert and ready for action, train them also to use that acquired vitality of theirs to maximise the use of time, i.e. to get the best use out of the time spent on any activity. This is the opposite of what we commonly call lethargy and sluggishness. The time spent on anything must produce meaningful results. In other words, mental alertness must invariably lead to fruitful and productive utilization of time. That is what we said in Pail as *nappamajjeyya*. It means 'eliminate all waste of time'.



Thought for the Day 2003 January 2

With the physical and mental alertness of which I spoke to you yesterday already implanted in you, let me take up the second half of the verse No. 168 from the Dhammapada. What the verse gives is *dhammam sucaritam care*. I have already translated it as **live the good life righteously well**. My stress, I place in two places - **righteously well** and **good life**. This is the way the Buddhist religion expects its followers to live. The word **dhamma** in this context means **the pattern of life** according to which the Buddhists must live. It is not what is merely

in the printed books, whether in Sinhala or in English. You need to get the Dhamma into your very living process. It is the very spirit of life. It is what gives your word and deed its very distinctive stamp. What you speak and how you speak, what you do and how you do, how you act and how you react, they all have to be determined by Dhamma.

There has to be a specific Buddhist way of behaviour, a way of doing things. All our words and deeds have to have a specific Buddhist foundation. It is that alone that generates the Buddhistness in each one of us and prepare us for the attainment of the goal we aspire to get to. It should now be clear to you that what we call *sīla* is set up to regulate our behaviour pattern in terms of words and deeds. Now the phrase *dhammaṃ sucaritaṃ care* which we quoted above and which we translated as **live the good life righteously well** covers this territory of *sīla*. This means that we humans should not use our hands and feet to cause injury and harm to others, man or animal. They all have a right to live. This is what we precisely call a fundamental right. Some at world level narrowly call it a **human right**. But the Buddhists have to think that it is a right of every living thing - the right to live and safeguard its life. We are glad that an unbelievably large segment of the world are now moving in this direction, and write books on subjects like **Animal Liberation, Save the Animals, Beyond Beef**, and so on.

These authors are by no means Buddhist. But I tell you, they accord so well with Buddhist thinking. They do not believe that animals were created by some graciously generous person to be eaten up by we humans. So in the new year that has just dawned, **2003**, why not we, the cultured Sri Lankans show the pioneering animal lovers of the world who have done this for decades that we also can show our genuine love towards the animals by not eating their bodies at least on a single day in the week. Why not go vegetarian on that basis. It will definitely do you do good on more than one count. That will generate a vibrant pattern of good life of love and care that accords well and truly with the dhamma.

In the regular Buddhist code of *pañca sīla* which every good man and woman must observe for the sake of peace on earth and goodwill among men, there are

a few more items which contribute to good living among the humans. We must honestly learn to respect the ownership of legitimately acquired property of others, whether that be of private individuals or of the state. For what belongs to the State is the collective property of the people. Can we ever learn to think like that? This, well and truly, is the beginning of living the good life righteously well.



Thought for the Day 2003 January 3

In terms of Buddhist thinking, the good life of man goes beyond respecting the so-called human rights. The Buddhist precepts based on *pāṇātipātā* and *adinnādānā* safeguard the human rights of **security of life** and **security of legitimately owned possessions**. The world over, civilized society endeavours to contribute towards these. In countries like Australia, England and America, people in larger and smaller cities, set up in their areas of residence, convenient territorial divisions which they name as **Neighbourhood Watch Areas**. People living down each lane would band themselves together to safeguard the property and the interests of the neighbourhood in which they live. There is a united conjoint effort, deeply rooted in a remarkable sense of magnanimity and philanthropy.

Buddhism also shows serious concern for the propriety of gender relations of men and women in society, whether married or still unmarried. In Buddhism love, marriage and sex are sacred institutions, sensibly related to and integrated with one another. The third precept of *kāmesu micchācārā* is firmly saddled in the *pañcasīla* to take adequate care of the female in society. Her rightful place is to be honoured. The discipline and restraint brought about through this precept is associated with a sense of decency, gentlemanliness and social decorum to safeguard our inseparable companion of the gentler sex against sexual assaults like rape, incest *et cetera* which are calamitously brought about by the male

membership of our own society who at times unfortunately turn out to be despicably irresponsible.

Sri Lanka very seriously needs the concept of **Neighbourhood Watch Area** to protect our women much more than any of our other possession. It may be that our women need to be insured against the menacing men in our midst. Sexual assaults are known to be taking place everywhere around us, very much in work places, both governmental and non-governmental. Enough cases come to be reported to us regularly. Who in this country does ever raise a finger to arrest these offences. Law enforcement in this country seems to be undoubtedly sterilized. Or it is congenitally born impotent.

Think of the escalating rate of abortions in Colombo. It is doubtful whether the thinking of any religious community in this country permits or condones it. But the greed for quick earned money in the minds of medical men of all grades makes abortion a delightful escape for the unrestrained behaviour of those who seek cheap pleasure via sex. Ministries with high sounding names like Law Reforms, how and where they wish to introduce their reforms has turned out be a pertinent question of the day. Whose cause do those who govern country mean to serve?

Finally, one more concern about drugs and alcohol in the country. They are indeed excellent money spinners for somebody, the State or the ingenious business tycoons. Nobody at the higher levels in the state machinery ever seems to realize how much of these ill-gotten money obtained through the sale of alcohol is drained off for the repair of damages caused on account of alcohol, damages through hospitalization, sex violence and highway accidents and the like. The philanthropy needed for the correction of these evils in the land is all the time pushed off the scene by ambitious political rivalries. Is the prayer in our country going to be all the time **each one for himself and God help us all?** In this new year of 2003 let us all awaken to the reality of the situation in the land and take adequate corrective measures, with or without the assistance of governments.



Thought for the Day - Full Moon Day of January 2003

Today is the first full moon day of the year 2003. It augurs well for you to make a couple of firm resolves on this day, in the name of your religion. I begin by saying - May this day turn out to be a day that has dawned well - *suprabhātaṃ*. It has dawned for you under a good asterism or *nīkata*, i.e. *sunakkhattaṃ*. It shall also bring you all the luck you need - *sumaṅgalaṃ*. Let us see that it does not remain a mere wish from me to you.

But do not forget that the Buddha, more or less, ridicules the belief in the efficacy of stars. In a story in the Jataka collection called the Nakkhatta Jātaka, the Buddha cynically asks a Brahmin young man who wrecked his marriage through his over dependence on auspicious times sought through stars. " What will the stars do? " He asks - *Kim karissanti tārakā*. Auspiciousness in anything lies in the successful completion of the task and achieving its results - ***Attho atthassa nakkhattaṃ***.

An excellent Buddhist New Year resolve for the Sri Lankans would be to learn the art of loving. A basic ingredient in the life of a Buddhist would be and has to be love. Psycho-ethically, it appears to be the most successful start for a Buddhist way of life in pursuit of Nibbana. Love in Buddhism is referred to as ***mettā***. It has none of the associations of erotic love of the English word. It primarily means **friendliness**, divorced from all ideas of enmity and hostility - ***averaṃ asapattaṃ***. Believe me it is one of the earliest stepping stones on the path to Nibbana.

If you are a keen student of Buddhism who wishes to start living it rather than learning about it, you would appreciate the Buddha's attempt in his presentation of the **Path to Nibbana** to organize a Buddhist follower's pattern of thinking. This is item No. 2 in what is called the Noble Eight fold Path. In that category of

regulated thinking or *sammā samkappa*, Buddhism expects to re-harness our faculty of thinking. From an excessive way of gratifying our sense desires through the eye, the ear etc. **we are required to reduce and delay this gratifying process**. Gratifying our sense desires **without any restraint or discipline** is generally believed to be producing unhealthy results. It is believed to be bad both for the body and the mind. Even western psychologists today advocate restraint in this area. They uphold a **policy of delaying one's sense gratification**.

With a reasonable degree of self-awareness, it should not be too difficult for a Buddhist to turn in this direction. As a Buddhist one has to realise that the first of these re-structured Buddhist patterns of thinking is *nekkhamma samkappa*. This means reduced proneness to sensory gratification. This is the opposite of *kāma samkappa*. This new trend indicates a reduction in the our pursuit of pleasure. A mastery over this area of human character is believed to be a considerable achievement.

The other segment of human thinking which needs correction and regulation is the trend to oppose, run into conflict with and be hostile to. This opposition or resistance is called *vyāpāda*. In the wake of this and as a compliment to this comes injury and destruction. This is *vihimsā* or desire to cause injury. The Buddhist way of thinking must lie between these extremes of greed and hatred, of excessive desires and dislikes. Such regulated patterns of thinking invariably bring about a reduction in the inflation of the ego. And that we know is the first triumph of the *sotāpanna* who infallibly gets into the stream that flows to Nibbāna.



Thought for the Day 2005 September

Wake up for the day. Waste not a moment. You have now much less time to spend than you did some years ago. It is others who draw up the schedule for you. You need to fit into it with your own awareness. Do not forget this point that

many things have to be necessarily completed today before you go to bed.

As you start the day, begin with yourself. Before you leave home, think of the many things you will have to do. Establish your self identity. You are a Buddhist. You must promise yourself every morning to continue being a Buddhist throughout that day. Pledge aloud your loyalty to the Buddha saying those words of adoration **Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa**. Say it loud enough to be heard throughout the house. Even your cat and dog need to know that you are a Buddhist. Make no secret of it. Be ashamed of it if you do not have the courage to do it. This act of adoration of the Buddha is the first act of purgation with which you must begin your day.

If your parents live with you at the moment, direct your thoughts of love and respect immediately towards them, accompanied with thoughts of appreciation. It is they who begot you, remember, reared you and brought you up to where you are today. These thoughts of grateful appreciation do not demand much time. This does charge your battery of life with reliable energy to last you more than one full day. Your parents do reciprocate their love and blessings to you. If you have any doubts about it, we do need to re-wire your whole setup to avoid a disaster of short circuit.



Thought for the Day 2006 January 1

Social degeneracy - time to take note of it in Sri Lanka today

"A man who could throw to the winds his sense of social propriety, and could grab with ease, with no compunction, what rightly belongs to others, such a man could live with ease in our midst. Shamelessly he would acquire for himself a position of eminence everywhere. For his is a life devoid of norms of decency."

[Translated by the author]

Nothing could be nearer the truth about human life in Sri Lanka today than this *dhamma* statement from the Dhammapada:

*Sujīvaṃ ahirīkena kākasūrena dhamsinā.
pakkhandinā pagabbhena saṅkiliṭṭhena jīvitam.*

Dhp. v. 244.

Society needs regulatory norms for its smooth running. The behavior of everyone therein, from the very top to the very bottom, has to be regulated to be in harmony and without conflict with that of everybody else. In Buddhism, human behavior is referred to as *cariyā* and comes to be classified as good and bad under the names *sama-cariyā* and *visama-cariyā*. *Visama-cariyā* or bad behavior immediately implies ruggedness, crudeness and incompatibility. It is jarring and unacceptably disturbs smoothness. That is exactly what the Indian word **vi+** **sama** implies. It does not total up to a completeness or conformity. Critics today would immediately tell us that these are built upon conventional and relative values. Admittedly so, there being dissentient patterns of behavior in every conceivable segment of life like eating, drinking, entertainment and sex.

But in human life, patterns of behavior are also determined by considerations which extend beyond one's daily bread and butter or rice and curry. At least it used to be so up to a decade or so ago. This was referred to as the religio-ethical territory. It meant that humans had considerations which endeavored to reach beyond their day to day physical needs. Their relevance was not necessarily beyond death. Conventionally though, it was believed to make the lives of humans richer here and now, less tumultuously and less ostentatiously. Two Buddhist terms *sīla* and *sikkhā* play a very vital role here.

We suspect that in Sri Lanka today, their vibrancy and vitality are hardly felt. Neither the givers nor the takers of *pañca-sīla* lamentably know not what they are doing. This basic *sīla* of the Buddhists, namely the *pañca-sīla*, like respect for life and respect for possessions of others, is required to bring about healthy and robust inter-personal relationships in the world of humans. In the failure to keep

them well, i.e. in their breach, the humans are said to dig out their very roots of existence in this very life: *idhe'va eso lokasmiṃ mūlaṃm khaṇati attano*. Dh. v. 247

Traffic on the highways of world capitals like New York and London at any time of the day proves the reality of this need. The city of Paris, with its new system of traffic flow in the Peripherie, brought about within our living memory of last fifty years, give proof to the fact that humans, if they wish to achieve perfection, they could do so within very reasonably short periods of time. We have been through both these phases, then and now and are proud of their achievement. It is time that the Sri Lankans, both the rulers and the ruled, awaken to this need to arrest the island-wide social decay.

The concept of *hirī* or sense of shame referred to above under *ahirīka* or shameless, coupled with the concept of *ottappa* or sense of fear, together in Buddhism constitute the duo which form the basis of social propriety. They are therefore referred to as 'world regulating norms' or *sukkā dhammā lokam pāleyyum hī ca otappañ ca*. Their absence is said to reduce the world to bestial levels in all areas of human behavior.



Thought for the Day 2006 January 2

Honesty as the Basis of Life of a truly Decent Man

Buddhism as a religion has centrality of man as its main theme of culture and development. This we call Buddhism's anthropomorphic approach to religion, both with regard to its explanation of life of man on earth and his escape from its miseries. We as humans count on no outside agency for reward or punishment. Trustworthiness is a better foundation for growth of human culture than a dreaded submissiveness out of a sense of fear of threatened punishment. One's

father and mother here at down to earth level, in our own homes, are the best guides in our lives, telling us how our lives on earth should be modeled. Therefore we call our parents the **first teachers**: *pubbācariyā'ti vuccare*. This associated guidance by parents while in one's home, excels all other forms via remote control from above or below. Leaders of countries or of nations on earth cannot shield themselves behind heavenly commands for cowardly acts of erratic behavior they take against fellow humans whom they view as being different from themselves or less elegant in their thinking and action. Gross errors of this nature, we witness, are being daily enacted around us.

Buddhism as a way of cultured living insists on honesty as one of the mainstays of its religious life. Day to day religious life of the Buddhist, unfailingly guided by the *pañca-sīla*, requires that honesty of word and deed be meticulously observed. The second of its precepts of abstinence from theft or *adinnādānā veramaṇī* implies the dishonesty in stealthily dispossessing others, for one's gain, of their legitimately acquired possessions: *adinnaṃ theyyasaṅkhātāṃ ādiyeyya*. The fourth precept of *musāvādā veramaṇī* requires honesty of speech. Dishonesty in word and deed is declared a criminal offence, equally heinous, both social and religious. The Dhammapada presents honesty in speech as the one guiding principle in life, *ekaṃ dhammaṃ*, which deters humans from slipping into forms of erratic behavior. If one has no scruples about being dishonest in speech, it is said that there is no crime that one would not stoop to commit.

*Ekam dhammam atitassa musāvādisa jantuno
vitiṇṇaparalokassa natthi pāpaṃ akāriyaṃ.*

Dhp.v. 176

The Dhammapada is equally insistent that a liar who in his speech falsifies what is actually true is destined to damnation in his life after.

*Abhūtavādī nirayaṃ upeti yo cā' pi katvā na karomī 'ti cā'ha.
ubho'pi te pecca samā bhavanti nihīnakammā manujā parattha*

Dhp. v. 306

An *abhūtavādī* is one who speaks of something that never happened as having happened. That is well and truly a false affirmation which is totally disruptive and puts society out of gear. The other totally denies what he has actually done. Buddhism calls this despicable behavior or *nihīna-kamma*. Any sensible society should look upon these disruptive crimes as deserving severe punishment. Slander and tale-telling and bearing false witness are derivative crimes freely flowing out of these.

It must be remembered that Buddhism's concern is not merely on the veracity of a statement. In the Kakacūpama Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya, Buddhism subdivides speech into five different areas on grounds of truth and falsehood [*bhūtena vā abhūtena vā*], timely and untimely [*kālena vā akālena vā*], gentle or harsh [*saṇhena vā pharusena vā*], wholesome or unwholesome [*atthasaṃhitena vā anattasaṃhitena vā*] and benevolent or malicious [*mettacittā vā dosantarā vā*. MN. I.126].

Thus we see that Buddhism's concern for peace on earth and good will among men, or the pattern of *Maitrī bhāvanā* our Buddhists engage in, is not merely a prayer on the lips of man, addressed to a power beyond himself, but a very constructive proposition to generate from within the heart of man the necessary momentum for his ascendance from the mundane to the transcendental. So please be extremely careful of what you say and how you say it, and what you do and how you do it.



Thought for the Day 2006 January 3

The Life of the Human and its Perilous Perch

From where did man come here? From here where does he go? To any

Buddhist, even with an elementary idea of *Saṃsāra*, these must necessarily be very relevant and meaningful questions about the dimensions of human life. Buddhist teachings say: "*Saṃsāra* is without a discernible beginning: *pubbā koṭī na paññāyati*. It is infinitely long: *anamataggāyaṃ bhikkhave saṃsāro*." Forget not that life of man from birth to death is only a single phase of his ceaselessly continuous journey in *Saṃsāra: sandhāvataṃ saṃsaratam*. This is a very valid time space concept about life which modern science is beginning to accept more and more today. Man is no more looked upon as a factory product, manufactured and sent down here, sometimes even with sub-standard goods smuggled in the process.

Each one of us in life is a self-propelled being, gathering more and more momentum for its continuity through our own life-activity as we go on. In eating, drinking and making merry, we are groping in the dark, for we do not really know what we are doing due to our own lack of vision. This is called being enwrapped in ignorance or *avijjā: avijjā nīvaraṇānaṃ sattānaṃ*. The craving [or *taṇhā*] for gratification of our sensory desires, built within us as it were, encrusts us more and more in this life process. This we call *taṇhā-saṃyojanānaṃ sandhāvataṃ saṃsaratam*. [All quotations are from SN.II. 178].

Caught up within this narrow vision of a single phase of life from birth to death, humans imagine that they are adequately insured for security against all recurrent external perils to life from elemental disturbances like earthquakes, tsunamis *et cetera*. These assurances are readily sought through prayer and supplication. But it is becoming daily evident that no body ever intervenes for their elimination or termination. But the Buddhists have firmly said that one can speak with sanity about their stoppage or termination, by any one anywhere, only with the transcendence into the state of Nirvana beyond the physical world of elemental reality.

Everything within the framework of the living world, according to Buddhism, is subject to the universal law of change or *anicca*. This we refer to as *sabbe sankhārā aniccā*. It is man's inability to contain himself within it that brings

discomfort and uneasiness to the human. This is *dukkha*. *Dukkha* does not exist in the world by itself. It is experiential. Man brings it about by his own maladjustment to the realities of the world. To the reality of every area in the world, both physical and psychic or mental. This world is said to exist within this fathom-sized body of ours: *Imasmim byāmamatte kaḷebare lokañ ca paññāpemi...* Once the truth of this in our living world is properly grasped, man is desensitized about it. He grieves no more on account of what happens in the world. This is the path to liberation and bliss.

*Sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā ' ti yadā paññāya passati
atha nibbindati dukkhe esa maggo visuddhiyā.*

Having briefly spoken about one's life in the world and the need to be adequately heedful about what we do with it, let us also give some thought to its two extremities, the past and the future. Even the world of medical science in the west is now prepared to admit and concede that the mind of the unborn child in the mother's womb is pre-monitored. Though not directly admitted to be so, we see in this the possibility of what the Buddhists would have to seriously think about as ` *saṃsāric* transmission of *karmic* effects throughout our journeying in life. Thus good and bad qualities of life which we inherit at birth, comfort and discomfort we go through in living, are necessarily products of our conscious karmic doings. As Buddhists, we need to be guided in life by this principle of *yathā kammūpage satte*. That *karma*, i.e. the way we behave, determines the quality of our life, from birth to birth, as we move on in *saṃsāra*. *Sīla* helps you to acquire adequate control over this.



Thought for the Day 2006 January 4

Parental Obligations: the Soundness and Good Health of one's

Family Life a priority

Dictionaries define a parent as one who has begotten or borne offspring, a father or mother. In days of pre-cloning or test-tube babies, this implied the physical sexual union of a man and a woman. Buddhist religious literature dating back more than twenty-five centuries, while speaking of the genesis of the human, refer to this same process of parental union or *mātā-pettika-sambhava* as providing the physical elemental basis of the human body or *cātummahābhūmiko ayaṃ kāyo*. Even a surrogate mother, like a sister or sister-in-law, heedless of any questionable socio-ethical implications, today can play this role. But in many areas of believed to be more cultured human society in the world of yesterday, a socially recognized legal union was a pre-requisite in the production of children.

This guaranteed the acceptance of legal responsibility for the necessary care and protection in the subsequent rearing of children on their arrival. A category as unwanted babies was not known to exist. Laundering of children of unmarried mothers on the one hand, and medical assistance from all grades of abortionists on the other, was not that widely prevalent. This legalized concept enabled people to view with alarm and possibly avert such situations like unmarried mothers and fatherless homes, leading to unmanageable crises like juvenile delinquency. But today their dangers and mishaps are being ignored and bypassed with ease. This obviously is an ugly shade, we are compelled to observe, in the modernity of the loosely-strung society globally in the world today.

Diverse cultures of the world would view marriage and the threshold of parenthood differently, each according to its own traditional thinking. One man could, with religious approval, own a reasonably large number of women as his spouses, or a number of women, particularly sisters, could own one man as their sexual mate. As for Buddhism, we can straightaway say that we start respecting marriage as the solid and stable foundation of family life, with a core of one's own children around which the much needed bonds of love and mutual trust grow with ease. This is why we are invariably lead to call upon conjugal fidelity as a corner

stone of Buddhist family structure. Devastating aberrant sexual attractions outside marriage are not only frowned upon in Buddhist teachings but are totally condemned. This is a primary item of Buddhist social and religious ethics. Its breach [*Sehi dārehi asantuṭṭho*] is severely stigmatized as being despicably low. Contentment in sex gratification, as is implied in the above quote, is an unquestionable must in Buddhist religious and social ethics. Its absence is totally condemned.

*Sehi dārehi asantuṭṭho vesiyāsu padissati
dissati paradāresu taṃ parābhavato mukhaṃ.*

Sn. v. 108

Being discontent with one's own spouses,
whoever is seen in the company of prostitutes,
or trespassing on the wives of others,
such a one is bound to perish.

Translated by the author

*Yo ñātīnaṃ sakhānaṃ vā paradāresu dissati
sahasā saṃpiyena vā taṃ jaññā vasalo iti.*

Sn. v. 123

Whosoever is seen sexually enjoying the company
of the spouses of his relatives or his kinsmen,
either with consensus or by force,
such behavior is deemed as being despicably low.

Translated by the author

Buddhist teachings have gone a long way in promoting Buddhist social scientists, both monks and the lay community, to correctly envisage these problems. But very unfortunately the more recent decades have witnessed the

arrival on the scene of modern interpreters of this area of discipline and morality of sexual behavior. Now both prestigious monks and laymen are known to preach and publish about sexual promiscuity as the rational and sensible Buddhist attitude to sex. Please leave Buddhism alone and do whatever you like.



Thought for the Day 2006 January 5

Care and Kindness in bringing up Children or Satara Sangraha Vastu - a Parental Obligation

In view of the over all observations we make today about the world of youth globally, it is opportune that we turn our attention to what has been said precisely on this subject by the Buddha more than twenty-five centuries ago. They are covered under a heading called ` Four ways of taking care of '[in Sinhala *satara sangraha vastu*]. At the very outset, we must categorically state that they pertain to the area of ` taking care of children by their parents '. We strictly allocate these instructions to the area of **child rearing** on the following evidence of the Pali text at AN.II.32 which says that ` in the absence of these considerations on the part of parents towards their children, neither the mother nor the father would receive any respectful treatment from their children'. Here is the Pali.

*Ete ca saṅgahā nā'ssu na mātā putta-kāraṇā
labetha mānaṃ pūjaṃ vā na pitā putta-kāraṇā.*

Elsewhere [at AN. IV.219], these same four items of successful handling of one's own children are mysteriously transferred to the area of successful handling or taking care of by a leader of a group of people, i.e. of one's dependents or *parisā*. This, we consider, an over generalizing of a specific area of instruction.

The four items under consideration in the successful handling of one's offspring as given at AN.II.32 are i. *dāna* or provision of food and clothing, ii. *peyya-vajja* or loving and endearing words, iii. *attha-cariyā* or success-guidance, i.e. counselling and iv. *samānattatā* or emotional mobility of parents in handling child-life situations like grief and joy.

One could hardly have any reasonable doubts about the above being nothing but obligations of parents towards their children as they choose to bring up a family. The mother and the father have to get together to provide these for their children. There seems to be very little room for single-parent homes.

In the world of mammals, breast feeding of the young by the mother is biologically nature's own command, lactation being looked after gradually in the very process of pregnancy. In other grades of animals, the father takes upon himself the responsibility to gather food for the new born ones. The human needs have a wider range to cover. Thus *dāna* would invariably include parental provision of basic needs of food, clothing, shelter and health care. This must necessarily come out of the parents' love for their home-born offspring.

The second item of loving and endearing words by parents towards their children or *peyya-vajja* is a must in the home. The spoken word can turn out to be an expression either of love and endearment or one of anger and resentment. One promotes love and tenderness of heart. The other scorches and withers away tender emotions of kindness and affection. This latter is the genesis of violence and aggression and hostility within the membership of the home. There can never be a substitute for this in any home.

The third is the role of *attha-cariyā* or what we would term success-guidance. Children are too young in years and, more often than not, lack the maturity and experience to judge for themselves what is best for them. This is where the wisdom of the elders should come in. Parents have to qualify themselves to fill this role. Every home should endeavor to build the correct and appropriate atmosphere for both the delivery and the acceptance of this absolutely vital

guidance in life structuring. Leave no room for any resistance in this area.

Finally comes *samānattatā* or emotional mobility on the part of parents which enables them to stabilize their children in crisis situations of emotional escalation, upwards or downwards. In both cases, the prompt lack of this support can be destructive in the lives of growing up children. We pray that Sri Lankans adequately restore this concept of *satara sangraha vastu* into their homes.



Thought for the Day 2006 New January 6

Children certainly do need to Respond to Parental Love and Care

I do hope I have parents and children sitting together, listening to me. Healthy and harmonious family life in the home has necessarily to be like the two sides of a coin. These are parents and children, the two mutually supporting each other. It does not make much sense to speak of the existence of one without the other. It is with this awareness that Buddhist teachings lay down ethics for the guidance of healthy and wholesome family life of parents and children. When the Anguttara Nikaya precisely specifies that the father and the mother living in your home, under the same roof along with you, are the objects of highest veneration, they are quite sure as to who should direct and determine the ethical and moral life style in the home. The Buddhist texts pointedly emphasize this as *Brahmā'ti mātā-pitaro*. It means Look upon your parents as the highest objects of veneration in life.

In Indian religious thinking they speculated on Brahmā as the highest position in heaven of the human father concept. He came to be called *pitāmaha* or the Great Father or Father in Heaven. But the Buddha, with his anthropocentric outlook, and his clear conviction about the biological parental genesis of human life which is unhesitatingly described as *mātā-pettika-*

sambhavo or originating from mother and father, courageously brought down to earth the concept of Brahmā and made him live with us in our midst. Our prayer therefore had to read as Our Father in the Home. His relations with us and his control over us had to be direct. There could be no remote control. Buddhists cannot entertain any concepts of cosmic intervention in their life process through self-appointed intermediaries who claim to harness cosmic powers on their behalf for such down-to-earth areas of activity like healing in illnesses, bestowing success in worldly undertakings etc.

Commencing with this respectful and reverential attitude to parents as those who begot us [*āpādakā* at AN.I. 132], Buddhist religious thinking takes parents to play the role of our educators in every sense of the word. They show to us the world, revealing its true identity, and making us understand it [*imassa lokassa dassetāro*. loc.cit.]. This tremendous role of parents make us call them our 'first teachers' [*pubbācariyā'ti vuccare*. loc.cit.]. For our own edification, we need to realize that one's parents are a continuous source of inspiration and intellectual and spiritual stimulation. These words of wisdom are not to remain petrified, locked up in stone, as inscriptions all over the world, like those of Emperor Asoka, or digitally recorded in the more modernized versions of today's CD s, so readily made available by generous donors, even in the forest hermitages of Sri Lanka.

In recognition of this incalculable service which parents render towards the physical, moral and intellectual growth and development of their children, the children are called upon to pay back their dues by being respectfully related to them in life and by attending to their physical needs: *tasmā hi te namasseyya sakkareyyā' tha paṇḍito* [loc.cit.].

Qualitatively, the children are expected to be at least the equals of their parents, if not superior to them. Parents would never wish to see their children get degraded to anything lower than themselves. Measured by all standards, even globally, this seems to be what is happening around us everywhere. The Itivuttaka Pāli has put it delightfully when it says:

*Atijātaṃ anujātaṃ puttaṃ icchanti paṇḍitā
avajātaṃ na icchanti yo hoti kulagandhako.*

Itivuttaka p. 64

The wise desire children who grow up to be their equals or are superior. They desire not those far inferior who are a stench on the family.

Translated by the author



Thought for the Day 2006 April 1

Religion in the Life of a People - A Safeguard against many a Disaster

What do we plan to celebrate today in the name of the Buddha with the brand name Buddha Jayanti? Reminding ourselves of the glorious message the Buddha gave to the world 2550 years ago, let us begin our new series of Thoughts for the Day with a more in depth study of our more or less daily habit of taking *tisaraṇa-pansil*. In many parts of the Buddhist world, with men and women of great maturity and a greater degree of sincerity in their hearts, they get this *tisaraṇa-pansil* from their religious clergy on a very devout request they make to them.

It reads as *Okāsa ahaṃ bhante tisaraṇena saddhiṃ pañca-sīlaṃ dhammaṃ yācāmi. Anuggahaṃ katvā sīlaṃ detha no bhante*. This is hardly known today in this part of the world. Even in the U.S.A., in places like Washington D.C. we have repeatedly heard it in the homes of the immigrant Bangladeshi Buddhists whenever we visited them to accept offer of alms. How delightful and how invigorating to older ones like us!

Relative to the religious devotion each one of us have within us, this certainly is invigorating. We are constantly establishing ourselves thereby on the solid and unassailable foundation of our religion. But who in this country, from the very top to the very bottom, wants it that way? Buddhism, or any religion at that, indicates many areas of unacceptable behavior in the lives of our men and women of all ages, of our boys and girls from well established and less established homes. We witness these daily during our counseling sessions. Marriages, romantic or otherwise, of very young people, in less than a year or two of wedlock, are seen going the rocks.

Addiction to drugs and alcohol, of very young people at that, drinking up to early hours of the morning in public places are widely known in this country. We know their genesis. We know equally well their disastrous and catastrophic ends. At too early an age, parents in this country cease to be parents, licentiously moving into new pastures, of new wives and new husbands, leaving their children in hands of the devil. Laws of the land are becoming extremely efficient to provide escapes out of such crimes.

Now the time is more than ripe for the parents in the home, or the Father in Heaven to be alerted to take prompt preventive action against both the erring parents and the erring children. Let Buddhist parents and even others who are interested in the noble art of rearing children awaken to this and focus attention on such comprehensive lessons like the *satara sarigraha vastu* for re-education on this noble art. We want all those who follow our creed to get enrolled within it by the honest and sincere acceptance of *tisaraṇa*. Say it aloud up to a third time, in the presence of the monk who gives it to you, that you accept and trust the Buddha as your religious guide- *Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi. Dutiyam'pi tatiyam' pi* as well.

Admittedly the Buddha is no more with us. But he has left behind the eternal or *sanātana dhamma* for us. So now let us focus attention on the *dhamma* which he has left for us with the same degree of devotion and dedication that we have for the Buddha. The Buddha has repeatedly declared that he who sees the

dhamma sees me - *yo dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati*. Our plea to you to-day is to make a genuine endeavor to return to the *Dhamma* as the one and only source of salvation for you.



Thought for the Day 2006 April 2

Protected under the Guidance of the Dhamma

We are told with adequate assurance that he who lives in accordance with the *dhamma*, i.e. a *dhamma-cārī*, shall never descend to lower states of decadence: *na duggatiṃ gacchati dhamma-cārī* [Thag. v. 303]. Here we see the infallibly assuring role the *dhamma* comes to play in the lives of humans. A grieving Ananda who was bewailing the impending passing away of the Buddha was told in a manner that was very convincing that the *Dhamma* and the *Vnaya*, promulgated and laid down by the Master would serve as their impersonal guide in his absence: *Yo vo Ānanda mayā dhammo ca vinayo ca desito paññatto so vo mamaccayena satthā*. Forget not, my dear listeners, the early history of the *sāsana* and the foundations on which it is built.

Have we received and accepted the *dhamma* in that exalted way and kept it in that eminent position? The three-fold *dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi* which we say once, twice and thrice [*dutiyam'pi tatiyam'pi*] during our *tisaraṇa pansil* at all odd times, during all manner of opening ceremonies, at state functions and at private gatherings, is meant to accept and consolidate this position of adoring the *dhamma* as our total guide in life. In Buddhism, this is a specific religious stand which would effectively take root only relative to the depth of understanding which a follower of the religion can contribute towards it. The *dhamma* has to be lived, and lived perfectly well, to receive the full benefits of happiness in life. In the teaching of the Buddha it is stated as *dhammo suciṇṇo sukhaṃ āvahāti* [Ibid.].

And remember at this point that Buddhism was not meant, at any stage, to be a religion of melodious chants, neither in the hands of monks or of lay men and women. But that is what it is today, specially in the popular chanting of *pirit*, when monks themselves would invite the lay men and women to join them in the sing song. What a descent, we would say in no uncertain terms, to lower depths. Buddhism as a religion was meant for people who could command some wisdom: *paññavatā'yaṃ dhammo n'āyaṃ dhammo duppaññassa*. Its contents had to be understood and made a living process in one's life. But today, to impress, as it were, on their customers the increase of benefits of *parittas*, the chanting monks, both the young and traditionally old ones have begun to competitively increase the thickness of the thread or *pirit-nūla* which they tie round the arm, from the traditional three strands to anything like six or even more, also getting the thread to contain a few colored glass beads inserted. It is not uncommon to see in the city young men and women, including even much older ones, wearing these like young calves with strings round their necks. We do pray that they get the required protection from the menacing infections of sexuality, alcoholism etc. that are in the polluted Sri Lankan atmosphere today.



Thought for the Day 2006 April 3

Unquestionable Models in Religion to live by *Saṅghaṃ Saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*

Today we come to item no.3 of our regular religious observance of *tisaraṇa* or taking refuge in our proven sources of inspiration, namely the Buddha, Dhamma and Saṅgha. Unquestionable historical records of our *sāsana* even speak of an early phase when we had only the Master and his basic teachings, i.e. the Buddha and the Dhamma. The earliest converts who turned out be the Buddha's first lay disciples are two merchants named Tapussa and Bhalluka. At

that time, there were no ordained Buddhist monks. So they had only two refuges to turn to. They are therefore historically referred to as *dve-vācīkā upāsakā*, i.e. those who took refuge in two *saraṇas*. The first enlightened disciples of the Buddha were by no means mere amateurs. The core was formed with the five-fold group, the *pañca-vaggiyā bhikkhū*, headed by Aññā Koṇḍañña.

Ere long, the Buddha himself announced the graduation of the first sixty *arahants* in the world [See Vin.I. 20f.]. He declared that all being *arahants*, no two needed go the same way on their missionary activities: *mā dve ekena agamittha*. They were safe and reliable enough to go, each by himself, unaccompanied. Yasa turned out to be the first to take refuge in the full-fledged three-fold *tisaraṇa* [op. cit. 17]. This third addition to the *tisaraṇa*, namely the *saṅgha*, is indeed to be viewed as unassailable proof of the efficacy of the salvation scheme propounded by the Buddha. It is one better than the space-age astronaut's landing on the moon. Here on earth itself, the Buddha testified to their liberation in Nirvana they attained here and now. No further proof was sought from elsewhere.

It is this infallibly exemplary role which the membership of the Saṅgha was called upon to play which elevated them to the status of a *saraṇa* comparable to the Buddha and the Dhamma. That is why in adoring the Saṅgha, the phrasing goes as *supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho* etc. Their forward march has to be in the direction of liberation from *saṃsāra* in Nirvana and not in the direction of Parliament for political reform. This eulogy is oft-repeated in the adoration of the Saṅgha, reminding us all the time of the loftiness of the life of the path-seekers, and that there can be no eulogies for those who change their direction through misdirection and misguidance.



Thought for the Day 2006 April 4

Pāṇātipātāveramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ is a great deal more than mere Vegetarianism

Precursor to the Buddhist concept of *pāṇātipātā veramaṇī* is unquestionably the Jain teaching *ahiṃsā paramo dharmah*. Non-violence towards all life is the highest ethic. This turns out to be the first injunction of the *pañca-sīla*. In both religions, Jainism and Buddhism, this would forbid every assault against any form of life, of man and animal, bird and beast. The Jains going even further, forbids injury even to unicellular life [*ekindriyaṃ pāṇaṃ*] of the plant world. No matter what the form of slaughter is, the miscreant is always traceable to be man.

World religions which subsequently followed, five to ten centuries later, aided by their circumscribed theories of creation, saw the possibility of placing in the hands of the Creator the creation of his lower grades, namely the animals, solely for the use of man, his first product. This is primarily for food. Secondly for all animal by products like animal skins for leather, furs for wearing apparel, etc. The concept of the unified integration of the entire *biota* as a whole received hardly any attention. Whatever may be the genesis of this attitude of man towards animals, it is undergoing radical change in the saner world of humans today. The possibility of maintaining such a position is even being challenged in the world of modern scientific thinking. Within such a framework of thinking, even the survival and continuance of life in the universe is at great risk.

Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī of the Buddhists requires that all life in the universe, both of man and animal, has to be respected. It is the duty of man to provide that they both live in comfort and with security of life. It is specifically contained in the Metta Sutta statement *sukhino vā khemino hontu sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā* at Suttanipāta v.145. *Sukhino* has to guarantee absolute comfort and *khemino* guarantee absolute security. These are words which have inspired saner rulers of the world like Emperor Asoka of India. Today, both in countries

like Australia in the east and America in the far west, men and women of sanity, dismissing their inherited religious creeds, are thinking on these lines. Proof of this are such inspiring books like Compassion, the Ultimate Ethic, Beyond Beef, Diet for a Small Planet, Save Animals, and Animal Liberation.

But in Sri Lanka, while a few older men and women endeavour to remain non-meat-eaters, they generously provide to their children all manner of animal foods like fish, meat, chicken and eggs according to their demands. They are also known to do this to keep their demanding servants happy and contented. It is also equally true that they keep a fair stock of such luxury foods to entertain their honoured elite guests. Lack of this, to most Sri Lankan Buddhists, would be an unbearable loss of prestige, These are the constraints under which our Buddhists live, trained to be so generation after generation.

But it is tragic, as far as we view it, how the Sri Lankan monks and the lay community gloat over their *pañca-sīla samāja*. That shall always remain the target of their Buddhistness. For this life or anything beyond, we ask.



Thought for the Day 2006 April 5

Safeguarding the means whereby one lives Adinnādānā veramaṇi
sikkhāpadaṃ

Buddhists begin their ethics of *pañca-sīla* with the injunction on respect for life and safeguarding its security, i.e. *pāṇātīpātā-veramaṇī-sikkhāpadaṃ*. As far as Buddhists are concerned, this extends even as far as the world of animals, i.e. all living things or *sabbe sattā*. The much-talked of Human Rights of very recent origin, of not more than fifty years ago, isolate mankind from the rest of life in the world, with pride or in ignorance we are not sure, turning their back on all other forms of life whose continuance is equally important for the survival of man. That

this is a lamentable blunder is being realised now, more and more.

These humans whose lives we endeavour to safeguard, must also have the means to live, the wherewithal like food, clothing, shelter, and personal entertainment, all of which in some reasonable proportion are absolutely essential. The Buddhists are expected to be aware of this basic needs of mankind. *Sabbe sattā āhāraṭṭhitikā*, that all have to subsist on food is one such gentle reminder, hinting also at the need to share means of sustenance in the face of haves and have-nots.

The basis of this is wealth and possessions, referred to in Buddhist texts as *bhoga* and *dhana*. It is for the acquisition of these that all humans, men and women, need to strive and toil, and engage in activity to make a living. *Dhana* is produced through striving: as they say *uṭṭhānādhigataṃ dhanam* or *uṭṭhātā vindate dhanam*. Food, clothing and shelter are necessarily the outcome of such energetic engagement in work. But primarily as a source religious inspiration, it must be remembered that Buddhism emphasises the need to acquire this basic need via just and righteous means, insisting on *dhammikehi dhamma-laddhehi bhogehi*.

Whatever wealth and possessions men and women acquire in this manner must be allowed to continue to remain securely as their legitimate possessions to serve as their source of joy in life. Buddhists precisely label this so calling it *parassa vittūpakaraṇam tuṭṭhijananakam*. This second injunction of the *pañca-sīla*, namely *adinnādānā veramaṇi* forbids any one from dispossessing another of his legitimately acquired wealth and possessions. Whatever is dispossessed may be broadly viewed as material things, or persons like wives, husbands and children or even positions in life like job opportunities and promotions etc. It is no secret that today, at all social levels, both elite and rustic, secret and crafty planning takes place everywhere, in public and in private.



Thought for the Day 2006 April 6

Propriety of Sexual Gender Relations a must in Buddhist ethics of *Pañca-sīla*

A death-dealing infection, call it viral or cancerous, related to impropriety of sexual behaviour of humans has now invaded Sri Lankan society, both within family life and well outside. We have seen warning red street lights in Tokyo and in some big American cities which indicate the degree of air pollution in the city. But in Sri Lanka where even the rate of Aids infection is believed to be reasonably high, nobody thinks it fit or proper enough to talk about it. But our Sri Lankan sympathy is so widely broad-based to plead for laying wreaths of red roses over the graves of Aids victims. This is typical Sri Lankan topsy-turviness, well and truly.

Over twenty-five centuries ago, the Buddha discovering the totality of human weaknesses in these areas of sexual recklessness, felt the need to itemise each one of these and issue warnings against their breach. But it is lamentable that over the centuries, in the hands of the middle men who were to handle this merchandise, namely the monks who are the custodians of the *dhamma* or *dhamma-dharā*, we have lost them in sealed off store houses. On the other hand, in the barrenness of *dhamma*-awareness in our country, new species of learned ones like specialist or specialised Buddhist monks, academics like historians and sociologists have taken to the field and started interpreting the teachings of the Buddha, each in the way it appears attractive and profitable to him.

To sample a few, some think that Buddhism shows no concern for the virginity or chastity of women, because their churchmen, i.e. the Buddhist monks, unlike the Hindu priests, do not officiate at marriages. We hope sanity has returned and such thinking does not exist any more. Our parting advice to any and every one is please take one look at the untarnished and uncontaminated third precept of the *pañca-sīla*. There is a vast store of information and instruction

on pre-marital sex, sex within marriage, and the more modern and fashionable extra-marital licentious sex liberties now being sponsored by prestigious Buddhist monks and lay preachers. Long sermons are not needed to the Buddhists on this subject. We are aware that thousands of teenage girls in America come forward to say aloud 'We are teenagers. We do not need sex. Sex is worth waiting for'. This is sanity in far off non-Buddhist America, if we wish to discover any. Many such precious pearls, we are quite confident, can be gathered globally, if only we know that it it does us good.



Thought for the Day 2006 April 7

Our pledge as Buddhists is towards being Morally Good - *Sīle patitṭhāya Naro Sapañño*

Today, I wish to bring our series - Thoughts for the Day -to a close with a few words on honesty in speech or *musāvādā veramaṇī* and abstinence from the use of drugs and alcohol, i.e. *surāmeraya-majjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī*. They are items 4 & 5 of the *pañca-sīla*.

Trustworthiness undoubtedly is the solid foundation on which all interpersonal relationships, whether within the family or in society at large, can be built up with wholesome confidence. It brings together people, husbands and wives, parents and children, friends and acquaintances, in bonds of close goodwill and amity, irrespective of caste creed differences. Let the truth be spoken, Buddhist teachings declare, with due consideration to propriety of time and place, genuineness of motivation, tone of speech etc. so that some good and not a disaster of any sort, comes out as a result of what you say. These are included under five considerations which are to be kept in mind in the exercise of acceptable conversation which are recorded in the Parable of the Saw

[Kakacūpama Sutta] of the Majjhima Nikaya. Speak not up to the entire width of your mouth. Without your ever knowing it, you shall thereby be plunged in a bottomless abyss: *Ye vadanti mukhāyāmaṃ tena nītā na taṃ vidū.*

Now over to the last of the five precepts of the *pañca-sīla*, namely *surāmeraya-majja-pamāda-tthānā veramaṇī*. This is the precept under which Sri Lankan Buddhists, mostly all-knowing veterans in all manner of eminent positions, play ducks and drakes, creeping through the vulgarised concept of drinking in moderation or *mada-pamanaṭa-bīma*. We say vulgarised, because even the medical authorities in the western world are unwilling to precisely indicate the last drop at which one gets drunk. They also ingeniously wrap coloured mantels round this, claiming that red wine is good for the heart. Evils of drinking are known to be more than getting a man on the floor. While a man is still up on his feet and drinking with confidence, his record of performance is noted to be, well and truly unknown to him, despicably sub-human. Buddhists of Haḍḍa in Afghanistan, in 200 A.D. had, fully believing in the teachings of Buddhism in the Sigāla Sutta and its Commentary, recorded them in their temple premises [See pictures on pages] as a warning against bestial human behaviour.

But in the ethics of the market place and the money-conscious business tycoon, production of alcohol, even for the Devil's Cocktail, needs no batting of an eye lid. Even state policies are known to turn a blind eye to these. Each man for himself. God help us all.

